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THE GREAT BRITISH COMICS MAGAZINE!

BRYAN TALBOT SPEAKS!

ISSN 1754-954X

BRYAN TALBOT

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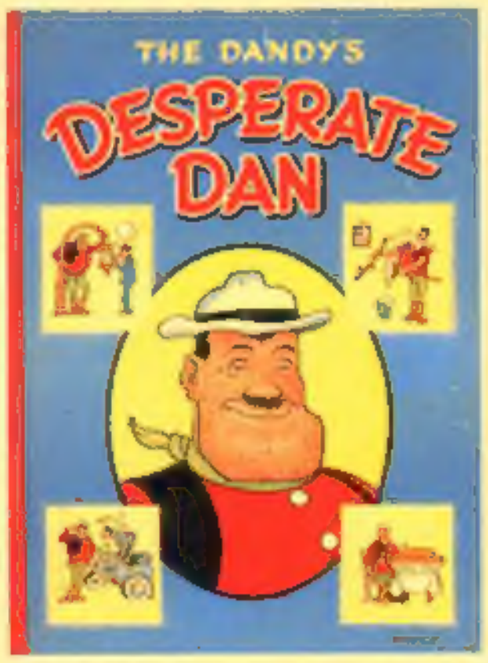

WELCOME TO

Crikey!

THE GREAT BRITISH COMICS MAGAZINE!

Glenn B Fleming *Publisher/Editor/Designer*

Back in issue 12, we ran our first Competition (in conjunction with Geoff West and The Book Palace). The number of entries was outstanding, but there could only be one winner...and that is (drum roll)...

Mr W Ritchie, of Friokheim, by Arbroath, Scotland.

So well done to Mr Ritchie for giving us the winning answer to the question 'In what year was Frank Bellamy born?". The answer, of course, was 1917.

Nine runners up will receive a copy of *Frank Bellamy's 'King Arthur & his Knights'*. And they are:

Matthew Jones, Shropshire. **Shane Harryman**, Ipswich. **Josh Lowe**, Watford. **DR Farnworth**, Bolton. **James McRobert**, Edinburg. **Cyril Gittings**, Stalybridge. **Aaron Waites**, Norfolk. **Dave Little**, Withington. **Peter Sutherland**, Peterhead.

Thanks to Geoff and all the people who entered–we'll have a new competition soon!

Tony Ingram *Editor/Writer*

Well, Spring has seemingly sprung and *Crikey!* is still here, having weathered a stormy winter. The return to black & white (which we're still hoping will be temporary) and the loss of a number of outlets when Borders UK went down has, I'm glad to say, not had any significant impact on sales, so we must be doing something right, at least. And we're continuing to look for more distribution. In the meantime, here's another gloriously not quite entirely monochrome issue for your perusal, and in my humble opinion it ain't half bad. We have interviews with two of British comics' most enduring talents, Lew Stringer and Bryan Talbot (Bryan, as the more observant of you will have noticed, also provided this issues cover), we have a potted history of comics by that same Bryan Talbot, we take a trip to Nutwood with Rupert bear and stop by for a look at the crabs in the rock pool with one of our best loved and longest running newspaper strips, the immortal Perishers. We have the final part of the seemingly endless history of Marvel UK, more from 4D Jones and Hatch and, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the mighty *Eagle* (launched back in April 1950, as if you didn't know) we have the first part of two two part features on the original *Eagle* and its 1980s/90s incarnation respectively. All this, and all the usual drivel, too! So what are you waiting for? There's more interesting stuff in this issue than me, by far...

Obituary

BILL RITCHIE (1931-2010)

On 25 January 2010, the British comics industry lost one of its often unsung heroes. Bill Ritchie began working for *The Beezer* in 1956 at the age of twenty four, and continued contributing to its pages until 1990, its longest serving cartoonist, as well as contributing to other DC Thomson titles including *The Beano*, *Sparky*, *Bunty*, *Bimbo*, and the title which launched his career in print, *The Weekly News*. With his unique style appearing on strips including *Smiffy and Hungry Hoss* in *The Beezer*, *Clumsy Claude* and *Sweet Sue* in *The Beano*, *The Moonsters* and *Barney Bulldog* in *Sparky*, *Toots* in *Bunty* and of course the ever popular *Baby Crockett* in both *Beezer* and *Bimbo*, amongst many others, Bill's work gave pleasure to generations of kids until his eventual retirement in the 90's. Even then, Bill retained an interest in comics; sadly, it wasn't until after his death that we realised that the William Ritchie who had a subscription to this magazine was the same Bill Ritchie who'd delighted us for years with his work. Thanks, Bill, you'll be missed.

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Contributors this issue:
Glenn B Fleming, Tony Ingram, Steve Hooker, Jodie Kihara, Peter Maddocks, David Slinn, Bryan Talbot & Alex Wiggan.
Special thanks to: Nigel Fleming, Peter Moore, Joel Nation & The Terry Nation Estate, Diane Hamer & the BBC.

Ace Comics **are a Preferred Retailer of** ***Crikey!***. **Check out www.acecomics.co.uk for a list of all Ace store locations!**

***Crikey!* The Great British Comics Magazine** *is published by Sequential Media Publishing Limited. Volume 2, Number 14.*
Glenn B Fleming: Publisher
13 Rosethorns Close, Gladewood, Middleton, Manchester. M24 6TP
Website: www.crikeyuk.co.uk

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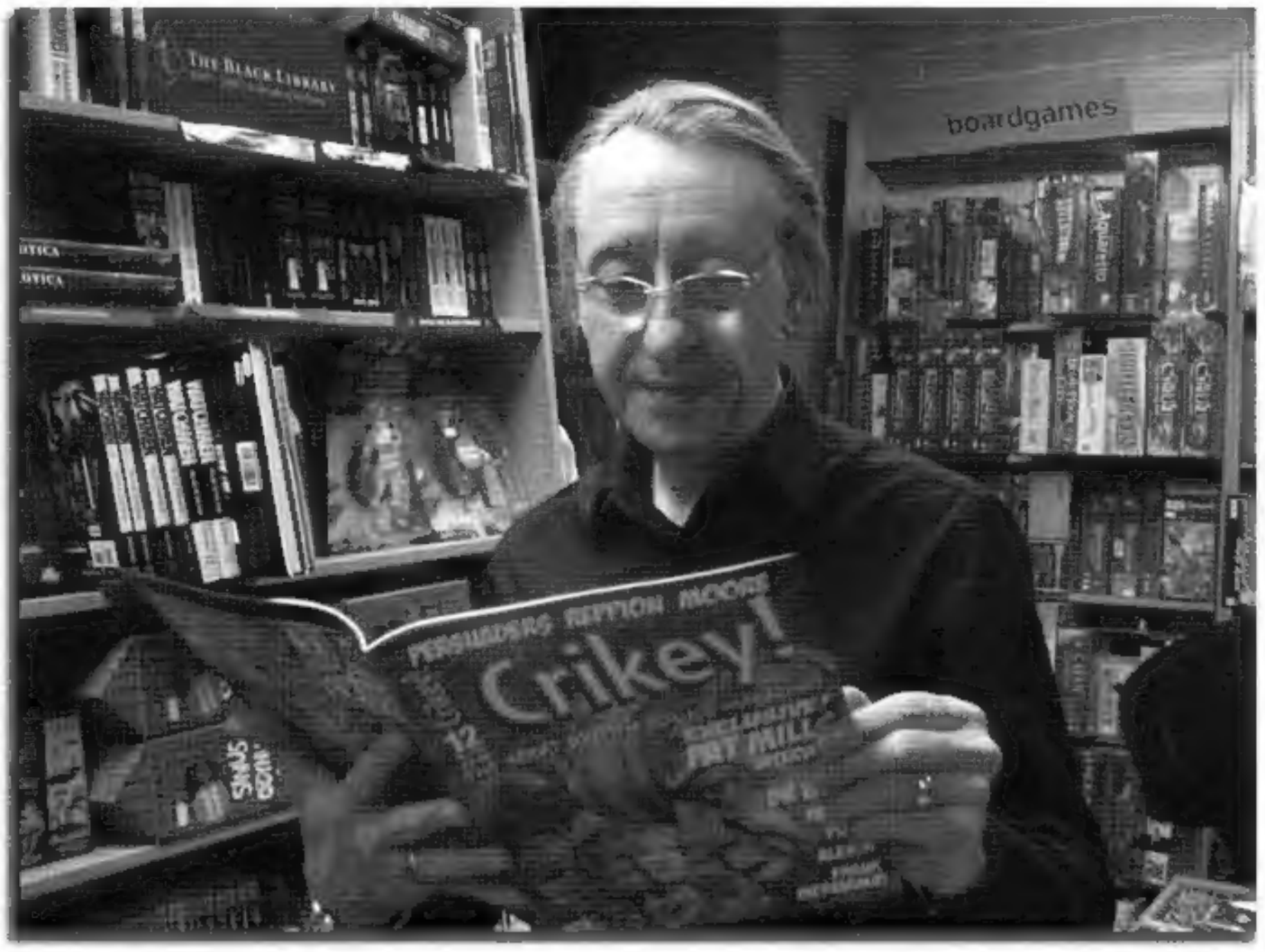
Bryan Talbot has been in comics for a while now; over thirty years in fact, and in that time he's won more awards than you can shake a stick at (should you for some reason want to do such a bizarre thing) and rarely been short of work. But more to the point, he's also rarely not been innovating, changing the way comics are seen.
Crikey! *finds out more...*

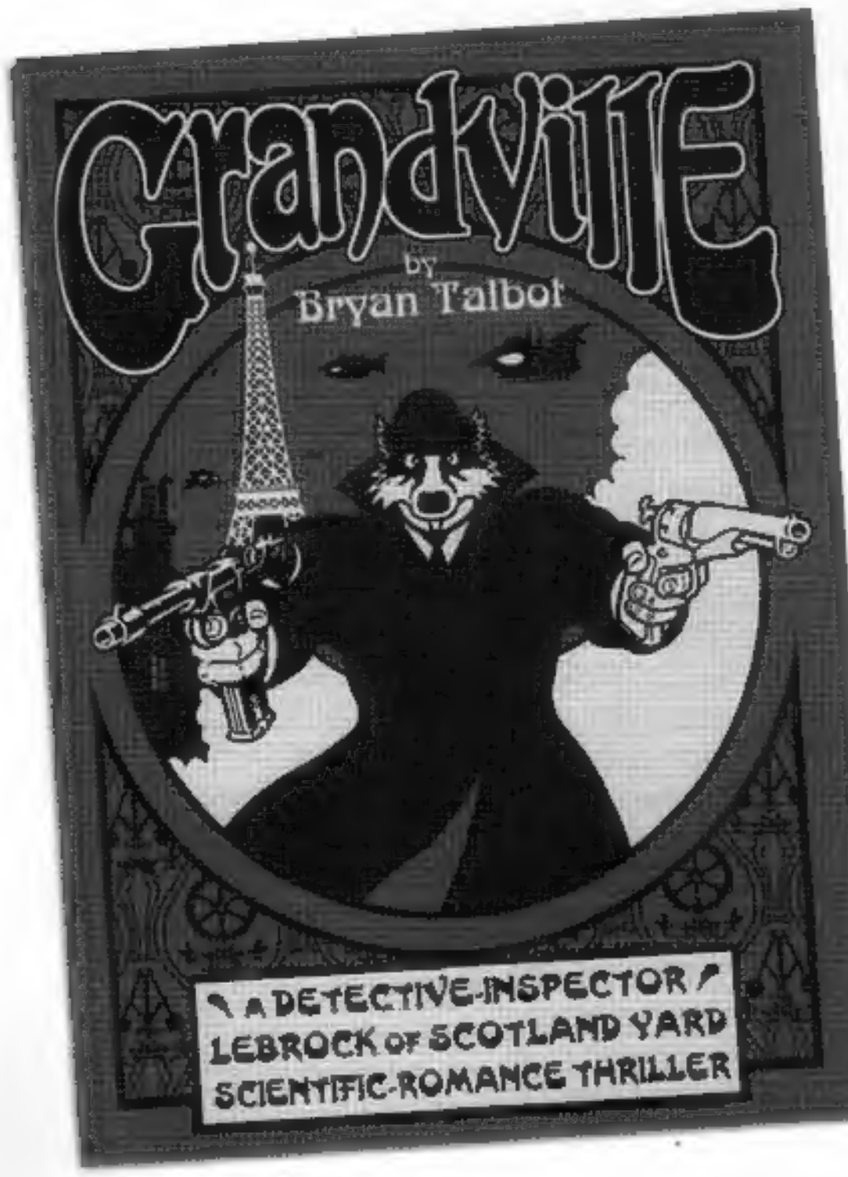
BRYAN TALBOT SPEAKS!



Crikey!: *How did you get into comics, and why? What had you been doing prior to that?*

Bryan Talbot: I was unemployed after college and met this guy in London, Lee Harris, the owner of Alchemy, the headshop in Portobello Road.

I showed him a few pages of this underground comic I'd started, and he said if you finish it, I'll publish it. I'd been drawing comics all my life for fun but did a course in graphic design at college as it never occurred to me that I could make a living writing and drawing comics. I would have done illustration instead if I'd known I'd end up working in comics. I had a few jobs over the years, such as designer for British Aerospace and I taught graphic design, doing underground comics in my spare time, but by 1981 I was self employed and working full time in comics.



C: *Chester P Hackenbush, from* Brainstorm, *was your first really popular character...*

BT: My first published strip was actually the weekly *Superharris* for the Preston college newspaper (1972), but Hackenbush was my first significant protagonist, yes. That was in the mid seventies (1975-78) but the three stories were reprinted after that in a collected edition (*Brainstorm!* 1982) and later, with other underground work (*Brainstorm!* 1999).

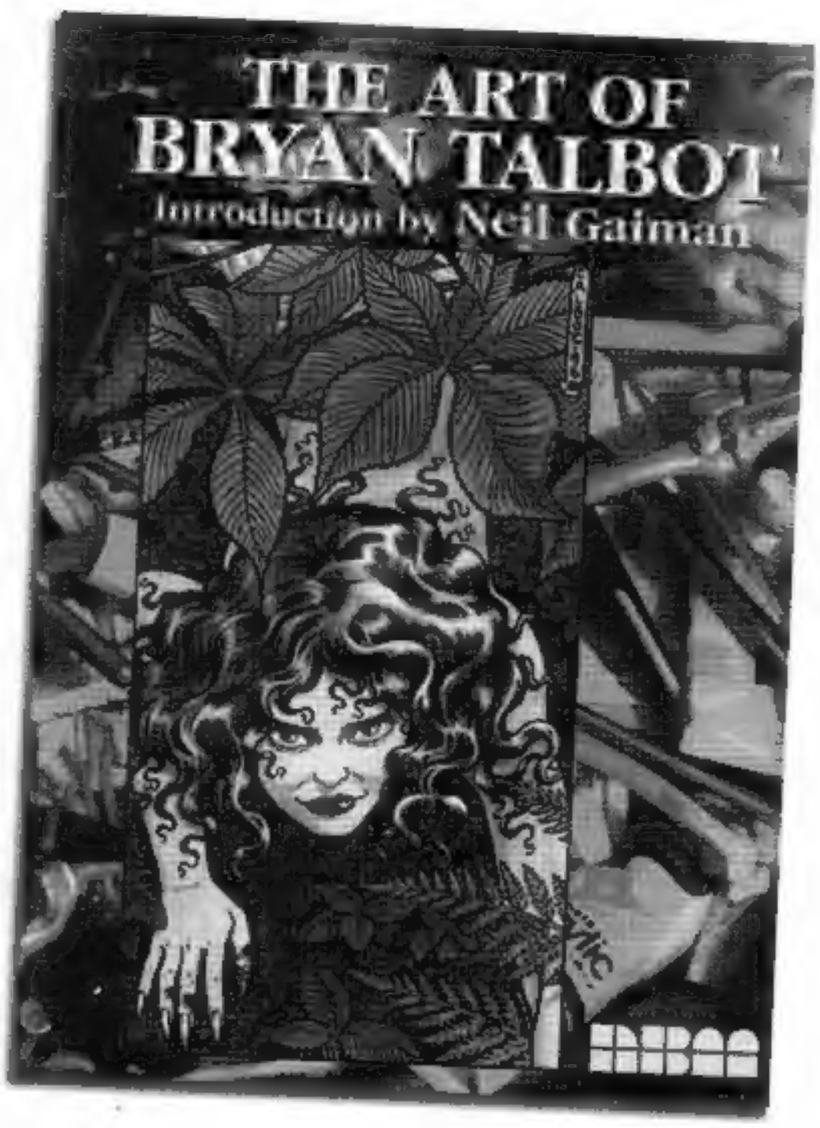
C: *Tell us about Luther Arkwright...*

BT: *Arkwright* was the first British graphic novel and also the first steampunk graphic novel. It was originally serialized in *Near Myths* from 1978 onwards, in the same month that Eisner's *A Contract with God* first came out, the book acknowledged as the first graphic novel, that is, the first one using that marketing term.

Arkwright started in *Near Myths* in '78, was reprinted in *Pssst!* In '81 and in 1982 the first collected volume came out, but then it got put on hold while I worked for *2000AD*. It was finally finished in 1989. The latest edition, now all in one volume, is digitally remastered and cleaned up so it looks much better and you can see detail that filled in or bleached out in previous editions.

C: *You won a few Eagle awards for that-and one for the follow up,* Heart of Empire.

BT: *Heart of Empire* was not as



experimental; it was a lot more straightforward in the way it was told. The reader had to work more with *Arkwright*, I think. You had to be very comic-literate to follow it.

C: *Why did Octobriana end up in Arkwright? Where did you hear of her?*

BT: In the late 60s Czech writer Petr Sadecky created a character called *Amazonia* with Czech artists like Bimba, and then looked for a publisher. He got nowhere, so he took the artwork, went away and wrote a book, 'Octobriana & the Russian Underground' (1971) supposedly documenting a radical secret political party in the USSR, the Progressive Political Pornography Party, who had created this character, Octobriana, an anti-state heroine. Basically, he drew a red star on Amazonia's forehead and claimed she was this character. There were no complete strips, just examples shown in the book which were supposed to be pages from anti-establishment Russian underground comics. I bought the book when it came out and, like everyone else, thought it was true. When I was doing *Arkwright* I included the character as a tribute to the bravery of these people, the PPPP, who, according to the book, could be arrested and even be shot for producing these comics. I didn't learn until later that they didn't exist. It was all a hoax. Sadecky eventually died in rather mysterious circumstances. Other people have used her since then, as, seeing she's supposedly the creation of the PPPP and never copyrighted, she's now in the public domain. Billy Idol has a tattoo of her, David Bowie wanted to make a movie about her, and she's had a few outings in comics in Finland (where a short *Octo* movie was released) and the UK–even in *2000AD*. She even appeared in an issue of the US porno comic *Cherry Poptart*. And Sadecky did well out of the book, of course. But her original artists never made a penny out of her. There was a large exhibition of Bimba's work last year in Prague that I was lucky enough to see that included some of his drawings and paintings of her that Sadecky didn't manage to steal for the book.

C: *The* Arkwright *stories have now been adapted by Big Finish Productions, who produce the likes of the* Doctor Who *audio adventures on CD (appropriately enough, the tenth Doctor himself, David Tennant, plays* Arkwright*). Did you have much input into the adaptations, into what did or didn't go in?* >

BRYAN'S DEPICTION OF 'PUDDLEGLUM' FROM THE FOURTH BOOK OF 'THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA' BY CS LEWIS (BBC RADIO TIMES, 1996)

BT: Although Big Finish bought the rights to *Heart of Empire* and have had a script written, it still hasn't been recorded apparently because David Tennant has been too busy to fit it into his schedule. I didn't have any input with either of the scripts. I did send a list of suggestions, but these were never passed on to the writer. I thought that they did a great job with *Arkwright*. My only criticism was that it was actually too faithful to the original. I think they should have adapted the dialogue to be more naturalistic in the medium of an audio drama.

C: Nemesis, *another series that won you a fair few awards, was the first series that really drew my attention to your work in* 2000AD. *The world seen in 'The Gothic Empire' was quite reminiscent of* Arkwright, *wasn't it?*

BT: Yes, it was steampunk, way before the genre definition. That was why Pat Mills wanted me to draw it. But I did a few things for *2000AD* before that. I did a *Ro-Busters* story, 'Old Red Eyes is Back' and a Future Shock, both by Alan Moore. Pat Mills asked me to do the *Gothic Empire* when Kevin (O'Neill) left to work for DC Comics. After that I did a few more *Nemesis* stories, inked a Glenn Fabry *Slaine*, and did a handful of *Judge Dredd* strips and a 20 page *Torquemada* role playing comic (in *Dice Man*).

C: *Tell us about 'The Tale of One Bad Rat'. You got an Eisner award for that, didn't you?*

BT: Yes, *The Tale of One Bad Rat* is probably my most successful book. It's been published in thirteen countries and is used in abuse centres and on the curriculum in several schools. I'm very proud of it. I was originally looking to do a graphic novel set in the Lake District, and I visited Beatrix Potter's house because I thought that might be a way in. After all, she told stories by using a mixture of words and pictures too. After thoroughly researching her I eventually realised that though Potter was a great children's storyteller, a comic about her life would be quite dull (even 'Miss Potter', the recent movie, made it more interesting by simply making things up). So I was back to square one when I saw this young girl begging on Tottenham Court Road tube who was being hassled by this giant bearded guy, a God-botherer trying to convince her to come and be saved. That became the first scene of *One Bad Rat*. She put me in mind of descriptions of Beatrix Potter aged sixteen–'painfully shy'. Afterwards I thought that this runaway girl could be the protagonist, a girl with an unspoken bond with Potter. When plotting the story, as a reason for her running away from home, I simply typed in 'her father was abusing her'. I thought that this was fair enough, as abuse is one of the main causes of runaways. It was only after I'd researched the psychological after-effects of sexual abuse that I realized that it was far too important to marginalize and that was what the story actually had to be about. It was the first non-genre story I'd written so I really went out of my way to make it accessible to non comics readers, people who didn't have that acquired knowledge of comics grammar that we've grown up with. In other words, the general public. This was why I got rid of all the things that non-comic readers think of as corny or childish, things like sound effects and thought balloons, wobble lines and whoosh marks.

C: *You've done a fair bit of work for the American market too...*

BT: I've done quite a bit for DC. A ' *Hellblazer* Special, *Fables*, *Batman*, and I did *The*

(ABOVE):. PENCILS FOR A SPLASH PAGE IN THE FIRST ISSUE 'TEKNOPHAGE' (1995)

(BELOW): PART OF THE ARTWORK FOR BRYAN'S FIRST ONE MAN EXHIBITION AT THE HARRIS MUSEUM, LIBRARY AND ART GALLERY, PRESTON (1981)

Nazz with Tom Veitch, which I think is one of the best post-*Watchmen* superhero stories. I did a lot of work on *Sandman*, which was sometimes very interesting as we used to work right up to the deadline. Sometimes I'd draw a character into the background of a panel and Neil (Gaiman) would see it and the character would end up in the script in the next issue. Sometimes, he'd be faxing me pages as he was writing them and I'd be faxing him pages as I was drawing them! I also did *The Dead Boy Detectives*, a *Sandman* spin-off with Ed Brubaker and wrote a *Dreaming* four-parter, *Weird Romance*. I actually did a cover for *Superman* this year. And stuff for other companies. I drew a *Teknophage* six issue miniseries, written by Rick Veitch and wrote *Shadowdeath*, another six issue series, drawn by David Pugh for Tekno Comics.

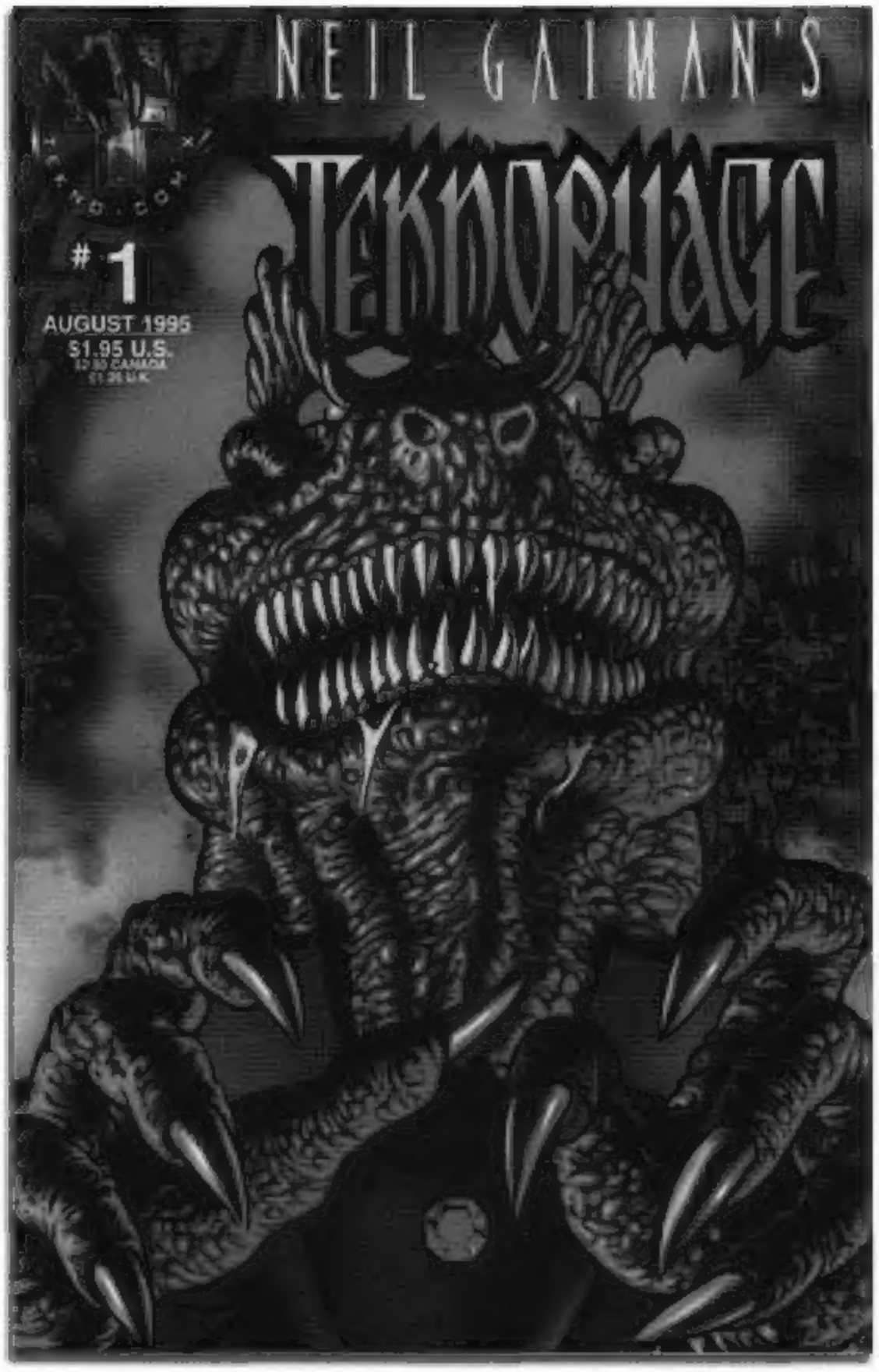
C: *You've never worked for Marvel, though?*

BT: No, I don't think I could work the Marvel method. I like to have a clear idea of what I'm supposed to be doing and am not going to do the writer's job–plotting the story–without being paid for it!.

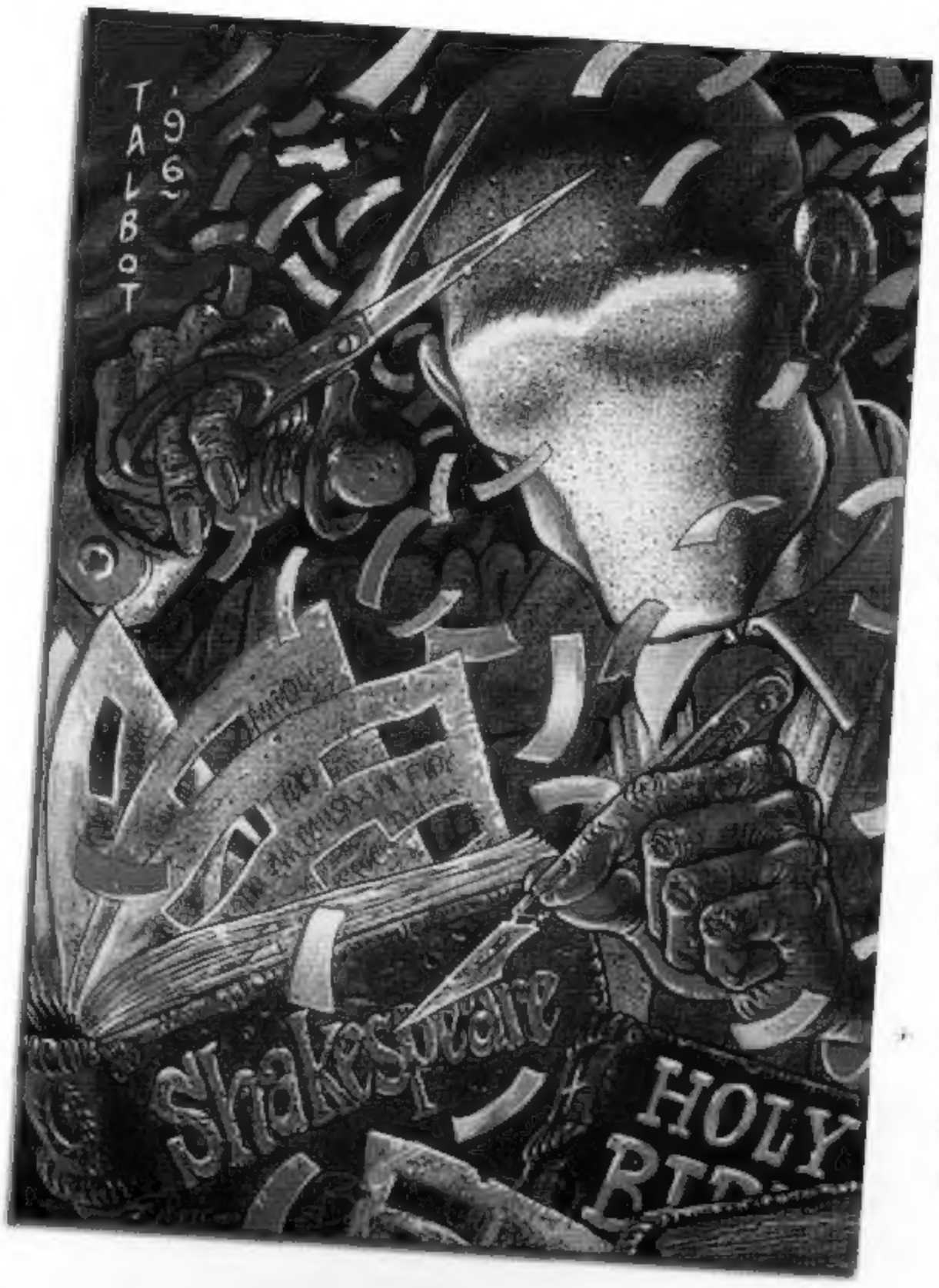
C: *I don't think they really use that method much anymore, it seems to have been pretty much an excuse for Stan Lee not to do much work.*

BT: I remember a story about when Gene Colan was drawing *Captain America*, there was this long, thoughtful scene of Captain America coming over all introspective and just walking around pondering whether he was relevant anymore.

That happened because Stan gave Gene next to no idea what the story was about, so Gene had no idea how to start it. So he just drew several pages of Captain America wandering around in the rain looking depressed and then Stan had to work out what the hell he was thinking! It actually made it a groundbreaking comic!



(ABOVE): 'TEKNOPHAGE'(COLOURED BY ANGUS McKIE (1995)
(BELOW): 'THE CENSOR' PAINTED FOR 'VISIONS OF FREEDOM'
(THIS ARTWORK WAS LATER USED FOR THE COVER OF 'WHAT RIGHT?')
1997



C: *What about* Alice in Sunderland*; what inspired it? A local history of Sunderland is not an obvious choice for a bestseller!*

BT: It's not really just about Sunderland. It's about stories and storytelling. It's almost impossible to categorize, so it was hard to find a publisher. Sunderland's history is a history of Britain in microcosm. I'd wanted to do something about Lewis Carroll and Alice Liddell for years but not an adaptation, because everyone does adaptations. And then about ten years ago I moved to Sunderland and found that Carroll had many links to the place. His sister married a Mackem (a Sunderland local). For many years, he stayed here for three months every year with his cousins where he even wrote parts of the Alice books including *Jabberwocky*, the most famous nonsense poem in the English language. Anyway, I started looking into these links and the history and that's where it came from. It's in its fourth printing, with 20,000 sales so far. The setting of the book is a performance in The Sunderland Empire, an Edwardian 'palace of varieties' so I made it a variety show, with each story told in a different comic book style.

C: *What are you doing now? What's next?*

BT: I wanted to do something short and fun after all the long slog on Alice so >

I wrote a prose book, 'The Naked Artist', about the urban myths of the comic industry, outrageous tales of comic creators behaving badly. Then there was *Metronome*. That was an experimental graphic novel. It was 64 pages, all silent, each page a sixteen panel grid. So it's in four-four time. The first page is just a metronome ticking! I did it under a pen name (Veronique Tanaka). That was also part of the experiment, partly to see if I could be recognized, since it wasn't done in my style at all but in a style I've been calling 'existential Manga'! I then wrote 'Cherubs! Paradise Lost', which is a supernatural comedy adventure graphic novel drawn by Mark Stafford. Mark's work is brilliant and it always amazes me that he's not nationally famous as a magazine and newspaper cartoonist. About the same time, 2008, *The Art of Bryan Talbot* was released. A collection of my book and magazine illustrations.

My most recent work is *Grandville*, published October 2009. It's an anthropomorphic detective-thriller graphic novel. There's a venerable tradition of these animal comics in Britain, going back to Tiger Tim and. Teddy Tail. Tim and Teddy were both huge comic phenomena in the first part of the 20th century, household names, with all kinds of merchandising, records

(ABOVE): LUTHER ARKWRIGHT
(BELOW LEFT): NEMESIS & PURITY BROWN
(BELOW RIGHT): DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LEBROCK FROM 'GRANDVILLE'

played on BBC radio, everything. Then there was Rupert. I grew up with the Rupert the Bear annuals. In *Grandville* the protagonist is Detective Inspector LeBrock, a huge English working class badger. The story starts with an apparent suicide which LeBrock quickly deduces is a disguised murder, quite a traditional English murder mystery scenario. This scene is set in Nutwood, Rupert's village, and his dad is even visible in the background, trimming a hedge. Inspector LeBrock and Roderick Ratiz, his adjunct, are seen leaving the village and you can see 'Nutwoo' on the railway station sign. I worked in a lot of in-jokes like that; an opium addict is Snowy from *Tin Tin*, who is dreaming the *Tin Tin* adventures. From the small parochial opening, the story increases in excitement exponentially, the murder trail taking our detectives to Paris, the Grandville of the title, a city of steam-driven hansom cabs, iron flying machines and automaton robots. The story gets more epic and action-packed as it progresses. It's very fast-moving. I've nearly finished penciling the Inspector's second adventure 'Grandville Mon Amour' and if these first two books do well, I'd like to do three more in the series.

C: *What do you think is the future of the British comics industry?*

BT: Graphic novels are the future; I've been saying that for twenty years. The growing market in graphic novels seems to be women of 30 plus, many of whom don't seem to have grown up reading comics. They like non genre material, literary stories, autobiography, not superheroes. The stigma about comics is very slowly dying out, I think. I'm now regularly invited to literary festivals. I've given talks about comic storytelling all around the world. Brazil, China. Europe, the USA, Australia. There is a new interest in the medium, and it's growing. And with the wealth and range of quality graphic novels that's developed over the last thirty years, this growth is sustainable.

C: *Bryan, it's been a pleasure speaking with you. Thank you very much!*

Bryan won an Eagle award for his work on Nemesis the Warlock in 1984, the 1987 Eagle award for favourite British artist, and won another four Eagles in 1988 for The Adventures of Luther Arkwright and a further two in 1993 for The Tale of One Bad Rat. He also won the Eisner award for best graphic album (reprint) in 1996 also for One Bad Rat, which won a further fifteen awards internationally. In 2000, he received an Inkpot award for achievement in the comic arts and he is also the first British comic book artist to have been given an Honorary Doctorate of Arts (by the University of Sunderland, in 2009). ●

Every issue, **Alex Wiggan** peers at comics...

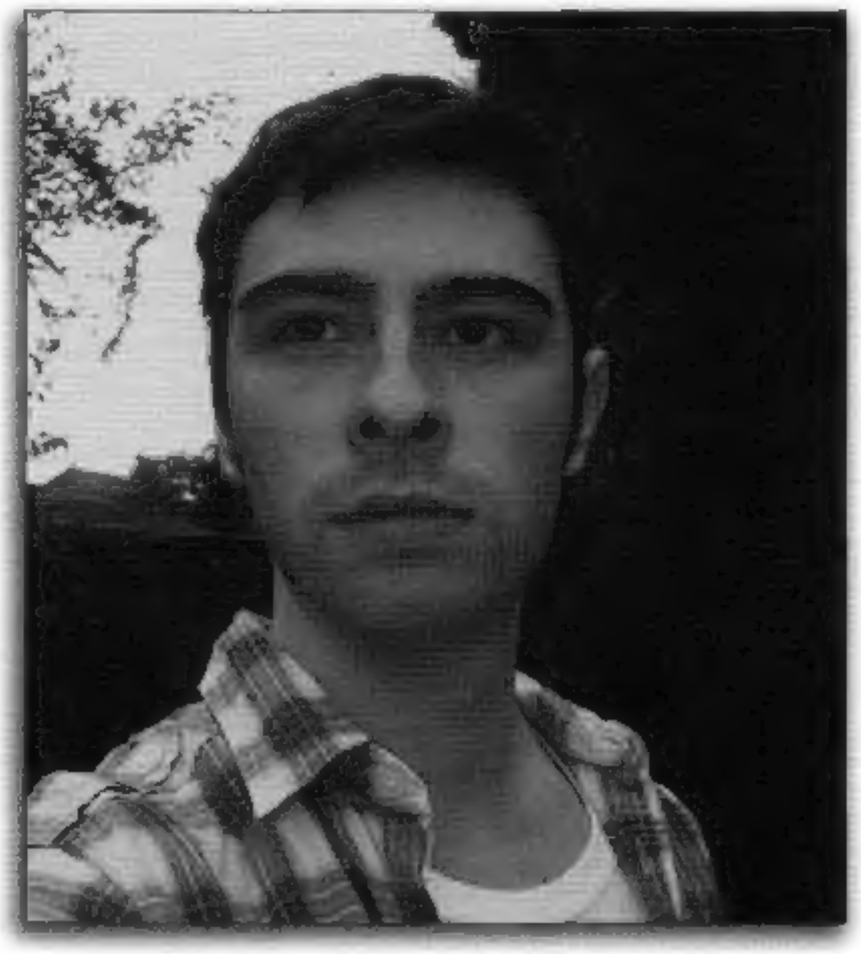
For those of you who have just walked in...

Born in the West Midlands at the beginning of the 1980s, Alex shunned the limitations imposed by half-day closing on a Wednesday and refused bottles of free school milk, in order to establish himself as an individual.

Keeping this goal firmly in his mind he sought out ways to develop his creativity and soon found himself fixated with comics, where he was able to tap into realities that knew no boundary. Over the years the comics became a constant companion as he worked his way through a succession of uninspiring jobs and as he neared his 3rd decade on Earth he let his love for them guide him towards his new role of informing the world of their magnificence.

Now, with Joe-public facing constant hardships he hopes to relieve the stress of everyday life, and unite fans of comics everywhere!

BEANO DOWN THIS ROAD BEFORE



BY ALEX WIGGAN

There you are in one of those small countries masquerading as a supermarket and as you reach down for a newspaper, before you join the incredibly slow moving queue for lottery tickets, you spot a copy of *The Beano*. The sight of it instantly whisks you back to days gone by so you pick it up and have a quick flick through to see if it's just as you remembered it. With each turn of the page you find versions of the same characters you once knew, only now drawn by different artists, but all the characters appear to be doing exactly what they have always done. Same old story you mutter to yourself and so you shake your head and wonder if any of this is relevant to the youth of today. You don't think your kids read it as it's not been endorsed by Simon Cowell and as far as you remember they have never mentioned their friends reading it either, so you chalk it up to being an outdated institution. You then put it back on the shelf, pick up your paper and search your wallet for the slip with this week's lottery numbers scrawled on it. In that brief instant you have failed to see what monumental situation has just occurred and that's because somewhere between acquiring a bunch of qualifications, deciding the right direction in life and getting the car taxed each year, you have lost track of time. It's not something that's instantly missed like the TV remote or the dog, so often goes by unnoticed, but when it's gone it can really make a difference. The missing time however isn't just minutes, hours, days or even weeks, but instead it's that special window in each person's life when everything seemed catered directly for you. You think this is how it is, how it will always be, as nothing will ever change and you will always stay the same person. Ok so there might be a touch of grey in the last remaining part of the hairline that hasn't thinned out, and that tight pair of jeans you always wear now has to be shoehorned on, but that's just physical stuff. As long as you keep focused, brush up on current trends and scan your eyes over the kids programmes once in a while everything will be alright. But it doesn't matter how many times you listen to a Kings of Leon album or how many of the current *Blue Peter* presenters you can name, it still won't change the fact you have passed the point of no return and *The Beano* has just sign posted it.

As comics go, *The Beano* suffers from an image problem and when up against all the superhero titles which vie for reader's attention, it seems more dated than the jar of cranberry jelly you've had sitting in the back of the cupboard for the last three years. Kids don't read comics the same way they used to because the internet and television project everything to them, they don't need to bother making the effort to search out information and adventure. Also the characters in *The Beano* have pretty much remained the same, the humour hasn't altered and so it's easy to instantly dismiss it for its lack of relevance for the generation of today. But it could of course be it just no longer appeals to you, kind of like as a teenager the way you lost touch with *Grange Hill*. You remember, it was that one year you spent your evenings hanging around outside the chip shop and from then on you just couldn't get back into the programme ever again. But even if it doesn't appeal, simply scan the headlines and the disruptive antics of Dennis and Gnasher aren't a million miles away from that kid who lives down the bottom of the road with an ASBO and a mutt that should be on the dangerous dogs act. He may come across as a lovable scamp, but the clue to his devilish intentions lies in his name. Then there's *The Bash Street Kids* with their constant attempts to reduce Teacher to a quivering heap on the floor because his hands are tied as to what he can do to stop them. Don't forget *Minnie the Minx* who might not be glue sniffing but who is one step away from a young offender's institution. In fact we all know a kid like *Rodger the Dodger* who always tries to get out of doing homework with one excuse or another, very much the same way when growing up you would fabricate a story involving that really difficult history assignment and an attack by a wild bear. Ok so in the current climate Lord Snooty would probably have lost all his money by now and be down *The Beano* Town Job Centre attending a back to work group meeting, but chances are he would no doubt still be snooty. In essence *The Beano* is a reflection of the news stories of today; yes the characters don't mean the same to you, but that's because you read about troubled kids in the tabloids and broadsheets every morning, but for some kids they are seeing a comical side to what is part of their daily lives.

The readership *The Beano* attracts now is much younger than perhaps it was in the past and put that down to children growing up faster or technological advances, what it does mean is that they read it because for them it is their voice. They relate to the comic not because they are the ones who are carbon copies of Dennis or Minnie, but because they just happen to know a Dennis or Minnie in their class. Each week they see that unruly child disrupt the music lesson or band practice with his misuse of an instrument only to then have the session halted completely, so he can be rushed to casualty to have a recorder surgically removed from his nose. *The Bash Street Kids* aren't from one particular classroom, but rather a collection of all the kids who frequent the back tables during chemistry lessons, rolled into one. What the comic does is it draws upon situations that kids have to cope with as they try to make their way through school life. It doesn't attempt to tackle every subject and that's perhaps why teenagers aren't rushing to recommend it to their friends, but it does reflect what's going on during school hours. The antics of the citizens of Beano Town are still relevant but it's the readership that has changed. *The Beano* has attempted to combat this by updating to remain contemporary and match its competitors on the shelves, but sadly it can't escape the fact that it has become another victim of that lost time window. There is no way to claw that period back, but just to keep going and make the necessary adjustments to fit in with what happens in the changing world around it. *The Beano* isn't tailored for you and it is no longer tailored to the generation that are the age you were when you first started reading it, but it is still around, meaning there is a group who have yet to experience the time loss. For them they still have a while to go before the hands of time decide they need to move on, but next time you reach for a newspaper, why not pick up a Beano instead and let it fill in the blanks as to what the hard hitting stories really are. ●

RUPERT

The Alfred Bestall Years

BY JODY KIHARA

In 1920, Lord Beaverbrook, the proprietor of *The Daily Express,* was watching with growing concern the popularity of his rival newspapers' comic strip characters, Teddy Tail of the *Daily Mail* and Pip and Squeak of the *Daily Mirror*. The strips were already immensely popular, with fan clubs and societies. Aware of the influence children could exert over their parents' newspaper buying habits, Beaverbrook knew he had to act quickly before a mouse, a dog, and a penguin scurried away with his market share clenched firmly between their teeth (and beak).

It was Mary Tourtel, the wife of one of the Express's editors, who created the character of Rupert Bear. Mrs. Tourtel, already an established children's author and illustrator, was brought on board to write and draw the strip. In November 1920, Rupert made his debut. The strip's format varied from one to four panels a day, sometimes taking up a large portion of the page, sometimes reduced to a small corner on a different page. Inconsistency aside, Rupert quickly gained popularity, and within a few years, small single-story Rupert books were also being published.

Mary wrote and illustrated the strip for fifteen years, when, due to failing eyesight, her replacement was sought. *The Express* editors were thrown into a panic when they realized that this was not as easily accomplished as they had hoped.

ALFRED BESTALL

Enter Alfred Bestall, an illustrator whose work had regularly appeared in *Punch*, *Tatler*, and *Eve*. He had also, among many other projects, painted several annual covers. Bestall's illustrations were light and elegant, yet beautifully detailed, and he had a particular knack with faces. Having found the only artist who seemed capable of reproducing Tourtel's Rupert with any faithfulness, the Express took him on. With only a few Rupert strips stockpiled, Bestall was thrown into the deep end, not only illustrating the panels, but writing the stories, too.

Before starting the job, he read letters sent in to the Express by children, and was 'shaken to his foundations' by the strength of Rupert fans' adoration and loyalty. He is quoted as saying that "...rightly or wrongly, I realised that it might be the most vitally important job in Fleet Street." Most

Rupert fans would agree. Bestall's worries were unfounded, however: while Mary Tourtel's Rupert had enchanted readers, his was a hit. Rupert's popularity was already well-established, but it was the talented Welsh artist who made Rupert Bear the phenomenon he is today. There have been other Rupert artists since Alex Cubie, John Harrold, and current artist Stuart Trotter but this article will focus on the Alfred Bestall years, when Rupert won fans and adulation worldwide.

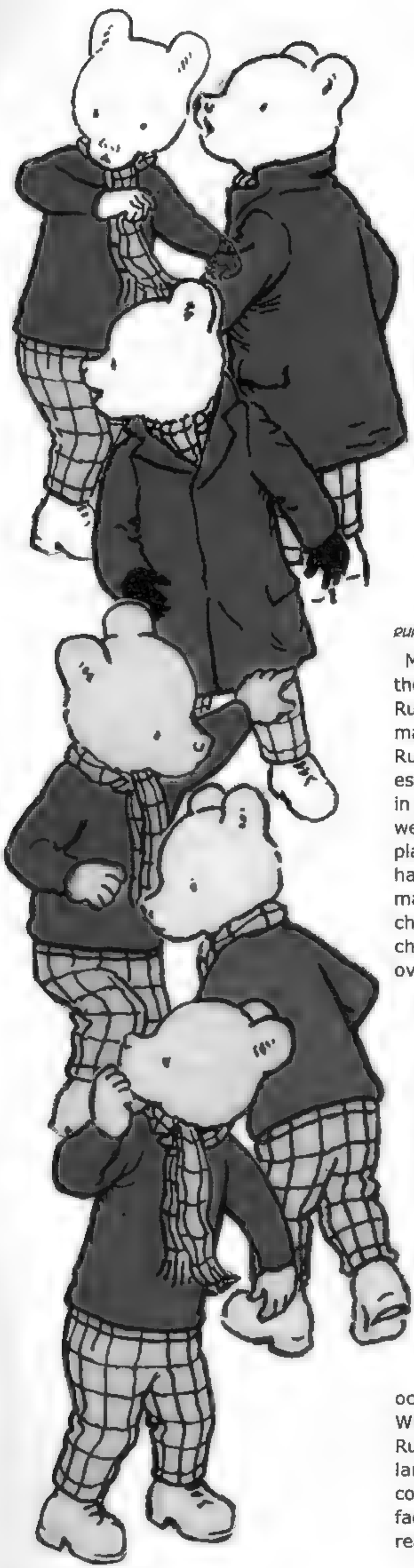
There were several reasons for this adulation. There was Bestall's breathtaking artwork, the improved quality of the stories, the fantastical yet quaint world Rupert lived in, and the subtle changes to the character of Rupert himself.

RUPERT CLIMBING SNOWDON AND PENLAN: RUPERT ANNUAL COVER 1964

BESTALL'S ARTWORK

Bestall's artwork was, quite frankly, exquisite. Not only did he capture faces well, but his backgrounds were much more detailed than Mary Tourtel's, showing his deep love of Welsh and English countryside. Nutwood, Rupert's village, encompassed all that was beautiful of British countryside: rolling meadows, rushing brooks, thickly treed woods, hedgerows and stone walls, and craggy seasides with sandy coves. Bestall was also a master of varying long-shots, close-ups, and different angles. We see the expansive beauty of Nutwood when Rupert sails above it in a hot-air balloon or flying machine, and then in the next frame, Bestall zooms in on Rupert's puzzled expression or the mystery object he holds in his hands. Never did Bestall skimp on composition: he would often have several levels of foreground and background in the one frame, giving remarkable depth. Even in the closer shots of Rupert, he would add extra touches like a woodland creature poking its head out of hiding to share Rupert's curiosity in what was going on.

It is amazing that for newsprint, Bestall was able to create (and have reproduced with accuracy) such detailed drawings, especially given that he was illustrating (as well as writing!) two panels every day, with no stories being re-run. And his workload was soon to increase: a year after Bestall joined the Express, the editor of the children's page decided the time was right to launch a Rupert annual. In 1936 the first annual came out, in two colours (black and pink) with a full-colour cover. The rhyming couplets that Mary Tourtel had used to tell her Rupert stories were reinstated, but Bestall's prose was also kept, so readers could choose whether to >



read the short or the long version of the text, or both. Many a parent who was begged to read a Rupert story before bedtime was grateful for the brevity of the couplets!

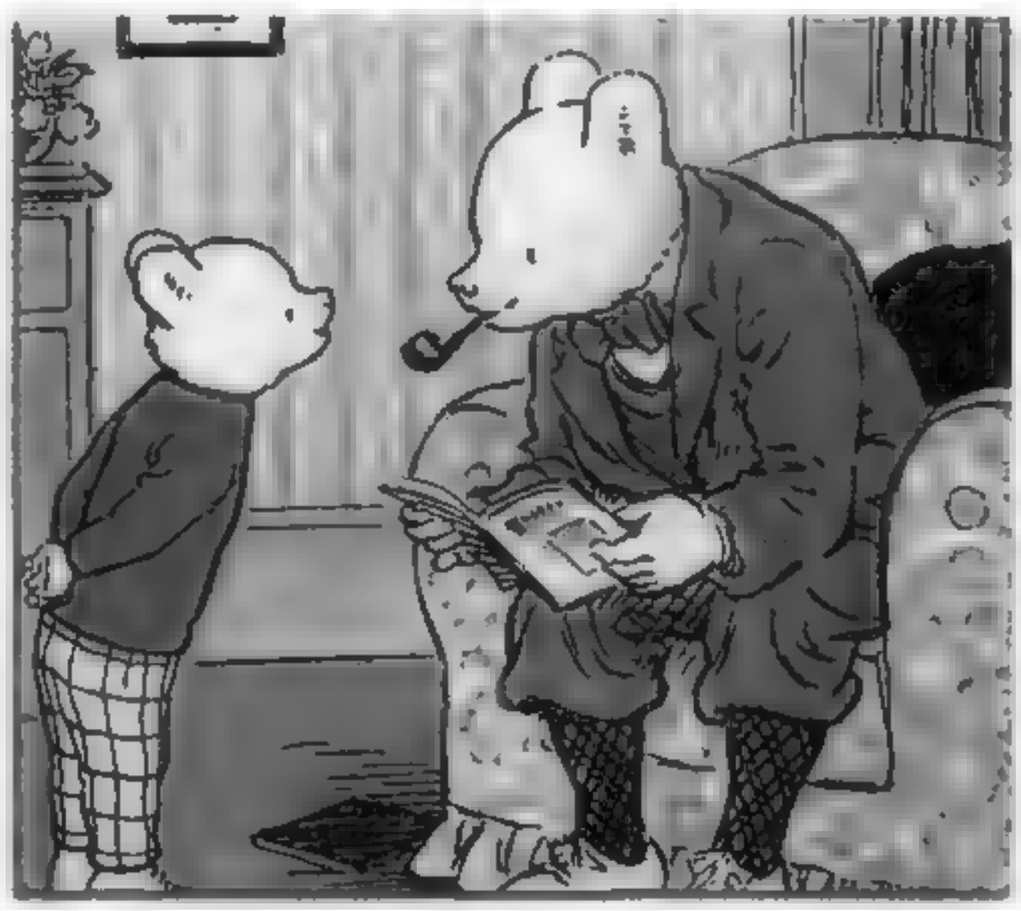
And then in 1940, the Rupert Annual interior went full-colour. This truly brought Bestall's work to life. The colouring of the panels was not in fact done by Bestall (and the excellent work of the colourists is seldom given enough credit). However, the covers were painted by Bestall, who was skilled in both watercolours and oils, and from 1950 onwards, he also painted extras such as puzzles, title illustrations, and in later years the endpapers, which were to become some of his most famous work.

RUPERT

More importantly to child fans, though, was Bestall's portrayal of Rupert. It has been pointed out by many fans and critics that for all Rupert appears to be a bear, essentially he is a little boy. He lives in a cottage with his parents, he wears clothing, he goes to school, he plays games with his friends, and he has hands. But Bestall's skill in maintaining the balance of an animal character with human characteristics is often overlooked. As any pet owner will know, one of the most fascinating things about animals is their facial expressions: they have fewer, yet are able to communicate so much. Rupert had few facial expressions, yet with the barest of changes, Bestall managed to vary Rupert's mien from happy to politely interested to puzzled to startled, and (only very occasionally) to scared or upset. What added to the repertoire in Rupert's demeanour was his body language. Bestall knew that to complement the subtleties in Rupert's facial shifts, the rest of Rupert's reactions had to be conveyed through his stance. If one starts looking for this in the artwork, it is amusing to see how often Rupert stands considering a mystery with great thoughtfulness, or reacts with mild puzzlement to the most outrageous of events. And it is through Rupert's stoic demeanour that Bestall kept such thrilling stories 'safe' for children; we knew that if Rupert wasn't panicking, we didn't need to either, and could enjoy the excitement of the stories knowing that Rupert would see things through in the end.

The drawings reflected the subtle change in Rupert's character that were taking place in the stories. On strict instructions from the Express, Bestall's Rupert was no longer allowed to be 'rescued' from his escapades by magic or fairies (it seems this was the one thing about Mary Tourtel's stories that children disliked!). So the enterprising little bear grew more capable of finding his own way out of mishaps. And it was the character of this inquisitive, courageous, and endearingly stoic little bear that most captured readers' hearts.

Even with the most outrageous of events going on (being taken away on the back of a sea serpent, brought to King Neptune's underwater court, taken captive by bandits, brought by wind creatures to cloud world where he might at any moment plummet to the ground) Rupert seldom looked scared. Only a few times in any of the stories did he ever cry (and once it was for breaking one of his mother's plates); by the next frame, he was usually discovering a way out of his predicament or greeting with his



usual fortitude the next part of the adventure.

Rupert's was not a brash, superhero-like bravery, but rather a quiet stoicism rooted in the charm of Nutwood's 'safety' (ironically, one of the least safe places in England, if Rupert's adventures are anything to go by). It is perhaps this understated courage that makes Rupert so quintessentially British.

Another reason children loved Rupert so much was that he made friends easily. Besides his usual gang of chums (Bill Badger, Algy Pug, Edward Trunk, Podgy Pig, Gregory Guinea Pig, Margot, Tigerlily, and the rest) Rupert acquired other friends along the way. There was Peter and his grandfather, Rollo the gypsy, Beryl and the girl guides, the Professor, Sailor Sam, the Wise Old Goat, and Santa's Golly and toy soldiers to name a few.

Woodland creatures also took a great liking to the little bear. If Rupert was held captive, it wasn't long before a small mouse would come to comfort or help him. A squirrel, rabbit, or bird might appear to give Rupert information or lead him to his escape. Even strange creatures like imps, sprites, and gnomes were soon won over by Rupert. In one of Rupert-fans' most loved stories, Rupert and Raggety, we meet what is perhaps Bestall's scariest invention: a strange, twig-like creature that seems to be part thorny plant, part bad-tempered imp. Raggety was unusual in his malevolence, and it was this, not usually seen in Bestall's stories, that kept children on the edges of their seats. But Rupert, unflappable as ever, soon befriends the strange creature, and a few frames later is seen walking home hand-in-hand with him.

RUPERT'S WORLD

Bestall was well aware that for the fantastical elements of the stories to be believable, and for the stories not to be too scary, they had to be grounded in a certain safety. To achieve this, he purposely started and ended most stories at Rupert's cottage. Many a story ends with Rupert running home across Nutwood common, his expression one of expectant joy as he nears his cottage, or with him tucked up in bed recounting his latest adventure to his parents.

And it was the reaction of Rupert's parents, as well as the other adult characters, that kept the stories not only believable, but for a child, immensely satisfying. Rupert was taken seriously, which is something all children crave. He was listened to carefully by PC Growler, the Squire, or Sailor Sam, and if Rupert had something urgent to convey, adults reacted at once. I don't know which seemed more fantastical to me as a child, the thought of Rupert talking to dragons and mer-people, or a world where all adults listened thoughtfully to everything a child had to say.

In looking at Rupert's parents, we can see where the little bear got his sangfroid. It's funny now, as an adult, to see the equanimity with which his parents treat Rupert's tales of being whisked away to a foreign country, imprisoned, and after escaping, being towed home by a giant fish. They never reacted with shock, alarm, or disbelief; they simply gave him cocoa and sat around to enjoy the tale. And they certainly never considered punishing Rupert for talking to >

BESTALL WAS THE MASTER OF PANORAMA...

strangers (which he often did), consorting with conjurers, pursuing pirates, searching for smugglers, climbing into caves and chimneys, or riding away on a sea serpent bound for China (although still home in time for tea). This was a world where adventures could happen – and if adults believe them, then they must be true!

ADVENTURE

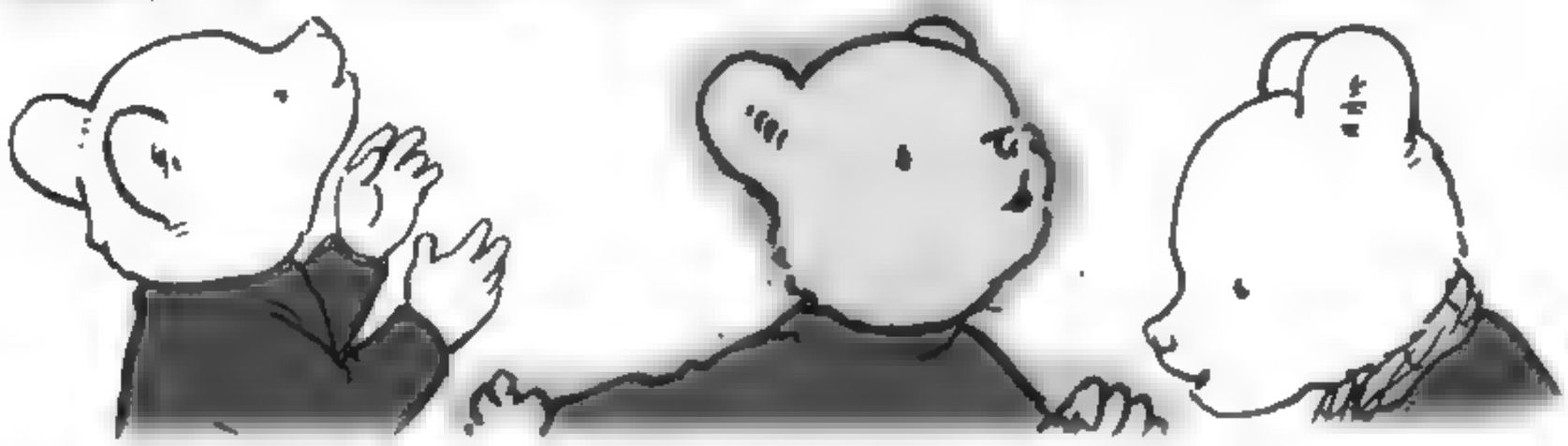
Bestall's subtle groundwork in creating this safe, believable world paid off, because the stories could soar with fantasy and excitement (and they did!) Nutwood was a place where Father Christmas really existed (and sometimes appeared, needing Rupert's help), as did imps, sprites, Jack Frost, a Chinese conjurer, an inventor (the Professor, whose inventions ranged from spring-heeled boots to flying machines), pirates, and more. There was King Neptune, with his mer-people and other sea creatures, including stallions made of crashing waves, and an octopus judge; there were dragons, giant birds capable of carrying Rupert off to mountain peaks, and never-before-seen creatures like Raggety, the Windlings, and the Gomnies. Even the landscape could take Rupert off on an adventure: a river might flow to a secret underground destination; a cave could lead to a smuggler's treasure stash or into a magical world; and plants given a special potion by imps could make you as light as air. These elements gave the stories a partial fairy-tale, partial Norse myth or Greek legend quality.

Amazing worlds lived both underneath and above Nutwood. Underground, imps had their laboratory to concoct plant potions; gnomes had a network of tunnels and caves; and a subterranean conveyor belt transported Rupert back to Nutwood from London. And up in the clouds, there was Santa's castle, where Rupert was taken many times, the Windlings' cloud world, and the Bird King's castle. Oh, how we wished we could live in Nutwood, where such things existed! Our own towns were dull by comparison. Many a child longed to step right into one of Bestall's drawings and run across Nutwood Common with Rupert and his pals, in search of adventure.

BESTALL'S STORYTELLING

Although Bestall started his career (and is usually still regarded) as an artist, his skill as storyteller was nothing short of genius. He had enough recurring characters for readers to be delighted when they showed up again, yet he kept the plots unique and fresh. Even the story titles were intriguing: Rupert and the House Mouse, Rupert and the Popweed, Rupert and the Gomnies, Rupert and the Whistlefish, Rupert and the Winkybickies, Rupert and the Blunderpuss, Rupert and the Flying Sorcerer.

The adventures could start off in the most simple of manners. In Rupert and the Whistlefish, one of Bestall fans' most loved stories, the tale begins at Rupert's cottage, with Rupert's dad wanting to buy some goldfish for his new pond. The two set out for Nutwood village, where they buy a singularly unusual fish.



Back home, when the fish starts whistling, Sailor Sam declares that it must go to the sea or it will perish. Taking the fish in a bowl, Rupert and Sam row downriver towards the sea, where their boat is suddenly whisked at high speed through storms and high seas... to China! Rupert and Sam are captured by soldiers and imprisoned in wooden cages on tall stilts above the water. The whistlefish explains its story to the emperor's advisor, and when it is returned to its pond with the rest of its kind, the whole school starts singing. The Emperor, delighted to have his favourite music back, frees Rupert and Sam, who after being entertained in the emperor's palace are then towed in their little boat safely back to Nutwood.

Reading the story as a child, the scene of Sam and Rupert being taken across high seas in a dark fog was thrilling; the guards with their armour and spears provided just the right frisson of fear; and the cages on stilts were morbidly fascinating. But as usual, our reliable little hero seems only worried rather than terrified; and when he meets the fierce-looking emperor, it's not long until the monarch is smiling and treating Rupert like an old friend. We have all the best elements of a Rupert story: adventure, fantasy, exotic locales, talking animals, Rupert's friends, and then home safely to Nutwood in the end. It is perhaps this story that best showcases the work of the colourists, too, from Rupert's garden to the sumptuous emperor's palace; and also inspired one of Bestall's most famous endpapers, *The Land of the Little Isles*.

THE END OF AN ERA

Bestall produced his last Rupert story in 1965, but his stories were run in the annuals until the late 1970s. He also continued creating covers for the annuals until 1973, and other extras for several more years. In total, he wrote and illustrated more than 270 Rupert stories, mostly as *Daily Express* strips, but some specially for the annuals. In 1985, one year before he passed away, Alfred Bestall was awarded the MBE. The same year also saw the 65th anniversary of the first Rupert story, the 50th Rupert Annual, and a the first ever Rupert 'biography', *Rupert: A Bear's Life* (highly recommended for any Rupert fan).

Bestall is regarded by many as a master, both in illustrating and storytelling. The Bestall annuals sell regularly on eBay, with older ones rumoured to sell for as much as $2,000. Bestall prints remain hard to find, and are usually snapped up quickly. And Rupert fans the world round remain proudly loyal to their favourite animal character.

Adults re-reading the stories will marvel at Bestall's breathtaking artwork. And those of us who adored the stories as children will still, I think, wish we could step into Nutwood and fulfill our lifelong dream of joining Rupert and his chums for at least one of their adventures. ●

THOSE PERISHING KIDS!

THE STORY OF:

The Perishers

BY TONY INGRAM

In February 1958, the Manchester edition of *The Daily Mirror* ran the first episode of a whimsical comic strip about a group of scruffy kids. Created by the *Mirror*'s cartoon editor, Bill Herbert, drawn by Dennis Collins and scripted initially by Ben Witham, it didn't really take off until writer Maurice Dodd was brought in to work alongside Collins. This combination did work. So well, in fact, that in October 1959 the strip in question went national and it appeared in the Mirror for almost the next fifty years!

It was called 'The Perishers' and it became something of a British institution.

INSTANT NOSTALGIA

The Perishers inhabit a strangely timeless world. They live in Crunge (also sometimes Croynge), which appears to be a grimy northern town of the kind seen in thousands of issues of *The Dandy* (though in fact, it is supposed to be in South London, taking its name from Croydon and Penge).

It's set in a Britain which could be in the 1950s, the 1970s or even the present day.

It is a Britain of brick schoolyards, anonymous houses opening directly onto the street, viaducts, and stretches of wasteland which could as easily be building sites or given the time in which the strip started bombsites.

It is, in short, a Britain cobbled together from the childhood memories of generations. It's a place where adults are not allowed; although occasionally we will hear the voice of Maisie's mother in another room, or the voices of

WELL YOU'VE NEARLY RUINED IT WITH MAISIE, MARLON
— WHAT WITH POURIN' TEA OVER BABY GRUMPLIN'
AN' THEN ATTACKIN' HER FROM THE REAR WITH THAT TEA-POT THINGEY
SHE'S REAL PEEVED I C'N TELL YOU
SHE'S ALMOST CONVINCED SHE SHOULD'N KISS AN' MAKE UP
CRUMBS, WELLIN'TON — YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEN' — HELP ME
CONVINCE HER — YOU C'N DO IT — CONVINCE HER!

WHO'S THE GIRL WITH THE BASKET OF ORANGES?
I CAN'T MAKE HEAD NOR TAIL OF THESE PHOTOS
'OW DID THAT GUITAR GET IN THERE?
WHO'S THAT DONKEY?
OH, CRUMBS -I KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED HERE
MARLON
I TOLE YOU NOT TO SHOVE THOSE OLD PESETAS IN THE SLOT

harassed teachers emanating from the smoke filled windows of the school staff room. But for the most part the kids are left alone.

Meet the Perishers

The five principal characters in the strip are Wellington, his dog Boot, Maisie, her little brother Baby Grumpling, and the long suffering object of her affections, Marlon. Here's a quick rundown for the uninitiated:

Wellington

is the closest thing the strip has to a lead character. Permanently clad in an oversized hat and Wellington boots (making him possibly the only kid in the world to be named after his own footwear), he is an orphan who lives alone (apart from Boot) and seemingly self-sufficient in an abandoned railway station. Originally, he lived in a concrete pipe, but moved up in the world in 1966.

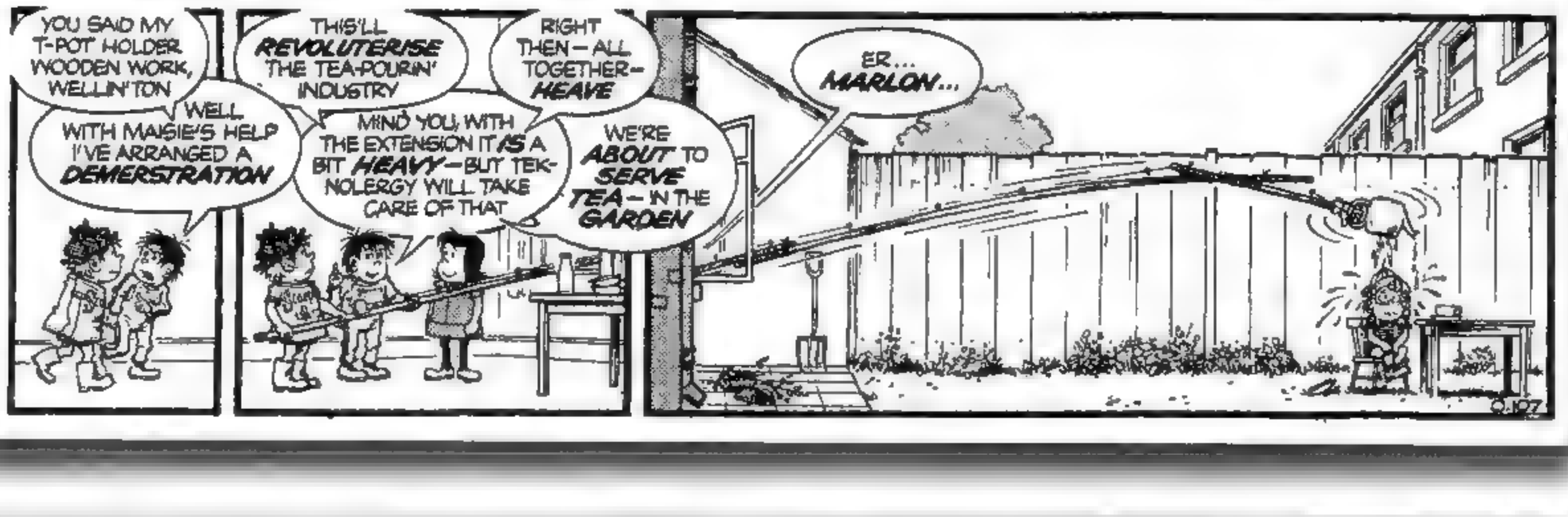
Curiously, this unconventional existence seems untroubled by official interference of any kind (though he does go to school, and occasionally mentions a welfare lady). Something of a philosopher by nature, Wellington, who supports himself by making buggies and selling them to Marlon, knows that he has very little in material terms. He also knows that he is rich in having his friends and his freedom (which doesn t stop him trying to cajole presents out of everyone every year on his birthday; October 25th, the anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt and day of "nashnul rejoicin"), as he puts it.

Wellington is also the only character who seems to be aware that he and his friends never actually get any older, though he rarely mentions it.

Boot

Wellington's faithful companion is Boot, an old English sheepdog who firmly believes that he is an eighteenth century gentleman adventurer, Captain Boot, formerly of O' Bunion's Intruders, bewitched by a gypsy wench: he should have bought the dam clothes pegs (it's hinted that this may actually be true).

Frequently, Boot provides the adult perspective in the strip, though he always remains in touch with his essential doggyness. >


YOU SAID MY T-POT HOLDER WOODEN WORK, WELLIN'TON
WELL WITH MAISIE'S HELP I'VE ARRANGED A DEMERSTRATION
THIS'LL REVOLUTERISE THE TEA-POURIN' INDUSTRY
MIND YOU, WITH THE EXTENSION IT IS A BIT HEAVY — BUT TEK-NOLERGY WILL TAKE CARE OF THAT
RIGHT THEN — ALL TOGETHER — HEAVE
WE'RE ABOUT TO SERVE TEA — IN THE GARDEN
ER... MARLON...
© 107

YOU'N' YOUR ROTTEN TEA-POT HOLDER, MARLON
JUS' LOOK AT BABY GRUMPLIN' — SOAKED
I'M BEGINNIN' TO THINK WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT YOU IS TRUE
YOU'RE A NIDIOT THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE
AN' NONE O'THEM ROTTEN INVENTIONS OF YOURS WORK
ER... MAISIE
WHAT ?
HOW DOES THIS GRAB YOU?
SHRIEK
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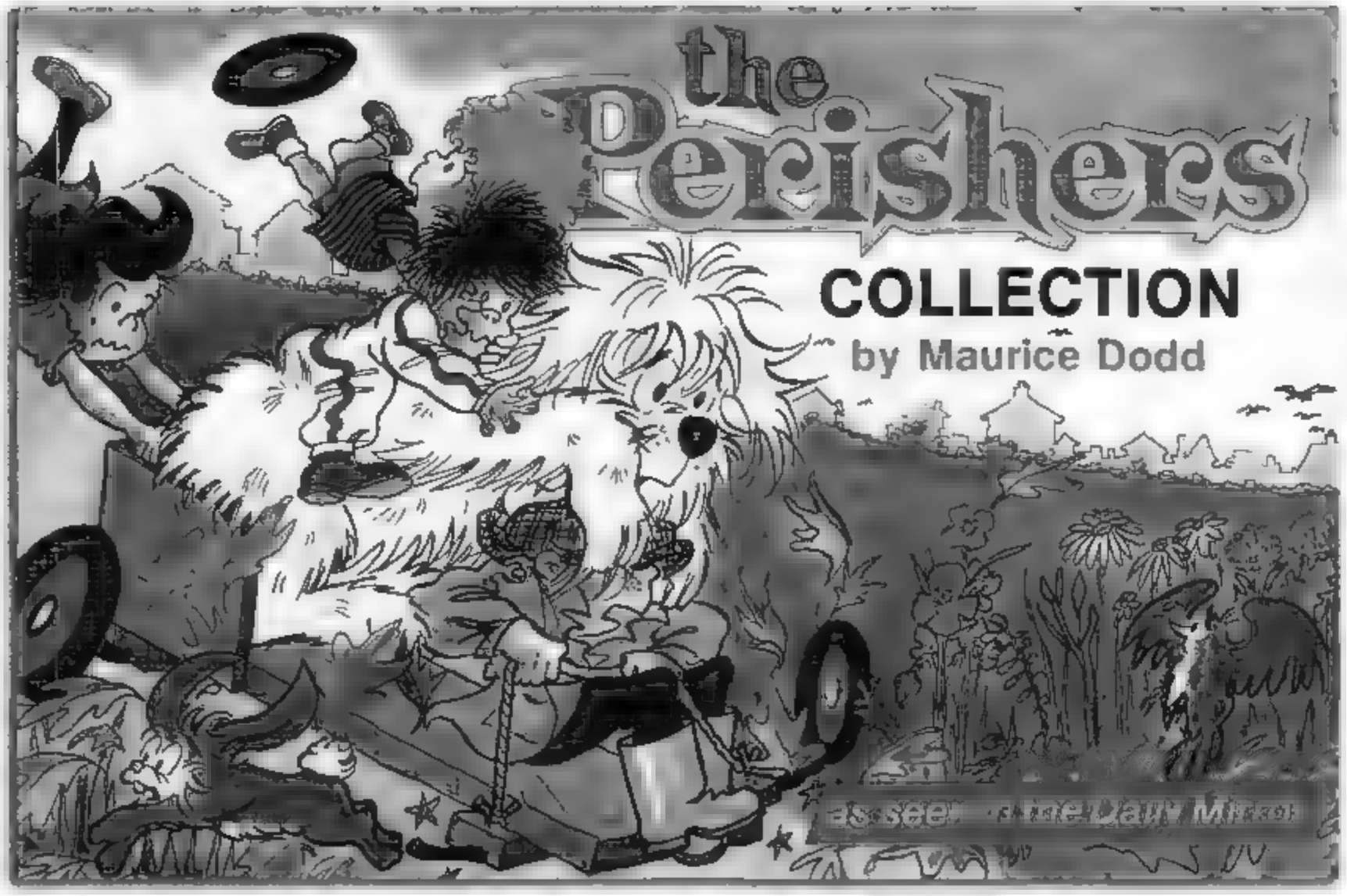


MARLON

is, as we are frequently told, a lump. A boy, yes, but a boy lump all the same. A happy-go-lucky individual untroubled by any intelligence whatsoever. His twin ambitions in life are to become either a brain surgeon or a bloke wot goes down sewers in big rubber boots.

He eats inch-thick ketchup sandwiches for lunch (inevitably, when he bites into them, whoever is standing nearest is drenched in ketchup) and fancies himself an inventor though his attempts to profit from his inventions are usually doomed by the fact that they never work. In some cases they have already been invented by other people (he was particularly disappointed by the wheel, for which he had high hopes).

MAISIE

is Marlon's one true love-though sadly, she has never gotten Marlon to understand this. A terrifying female (honest) with a quick temper and a lethal swing with a satchel, she is convinced that she is a femme fatale, irresistible to males. She'd have the grace of a gazelle, if it weren't for the army boots.

BABY GRUMPLING

Finally, we have Baby Grumpling, Maisie s beloved brother. Grumpling has the appearance of an angel, but his innocent smile and golden curls hide the mind of a criminal genius.

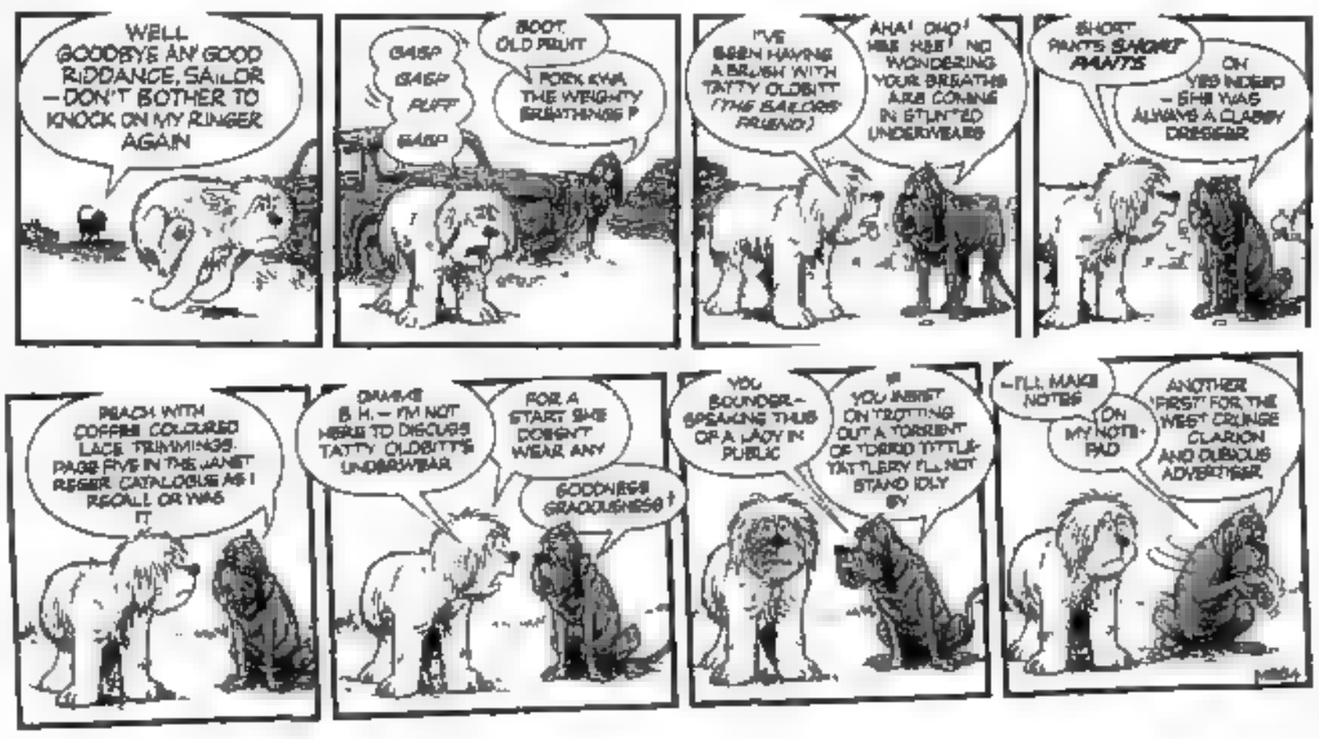
Dedicated to causing mayhem wherever he goes, he is the master of the glue on the loo seat and the spider in the knickers drawer. He has also done more to exploit the culinary opportunities offered by worms than anyone on Earth though consumer resistance to his creations remains inexplicably high.

Curiously, in early strips Grumpling did not seem to be related to Maisie at all, though later their relationship is made clear. Initially silent (he was perfectly capable of talking but knew if he started he would be surrendering some of the benefits of being a baby), he is baffled by the ways of the older kids and adults. He believes school to be a prison from which the others are released every evening. He shares his thoughts on the idiocy of adults with the new baby, a forever unseen presence shrouded in the depths of its pram.

We also saw Fiscal Yere, he of the chocolate cigars, always viewing the world through an accountant s eyes, Maisie's friend (and rival for Marlon s affections) Plain Jane and the fearsome Beryl Bogey.

The shaggy-haired (so much so that it obscures his face completely) Aloysius Dirty McSquirty, forever accompanied by a cloud of talkative flies.

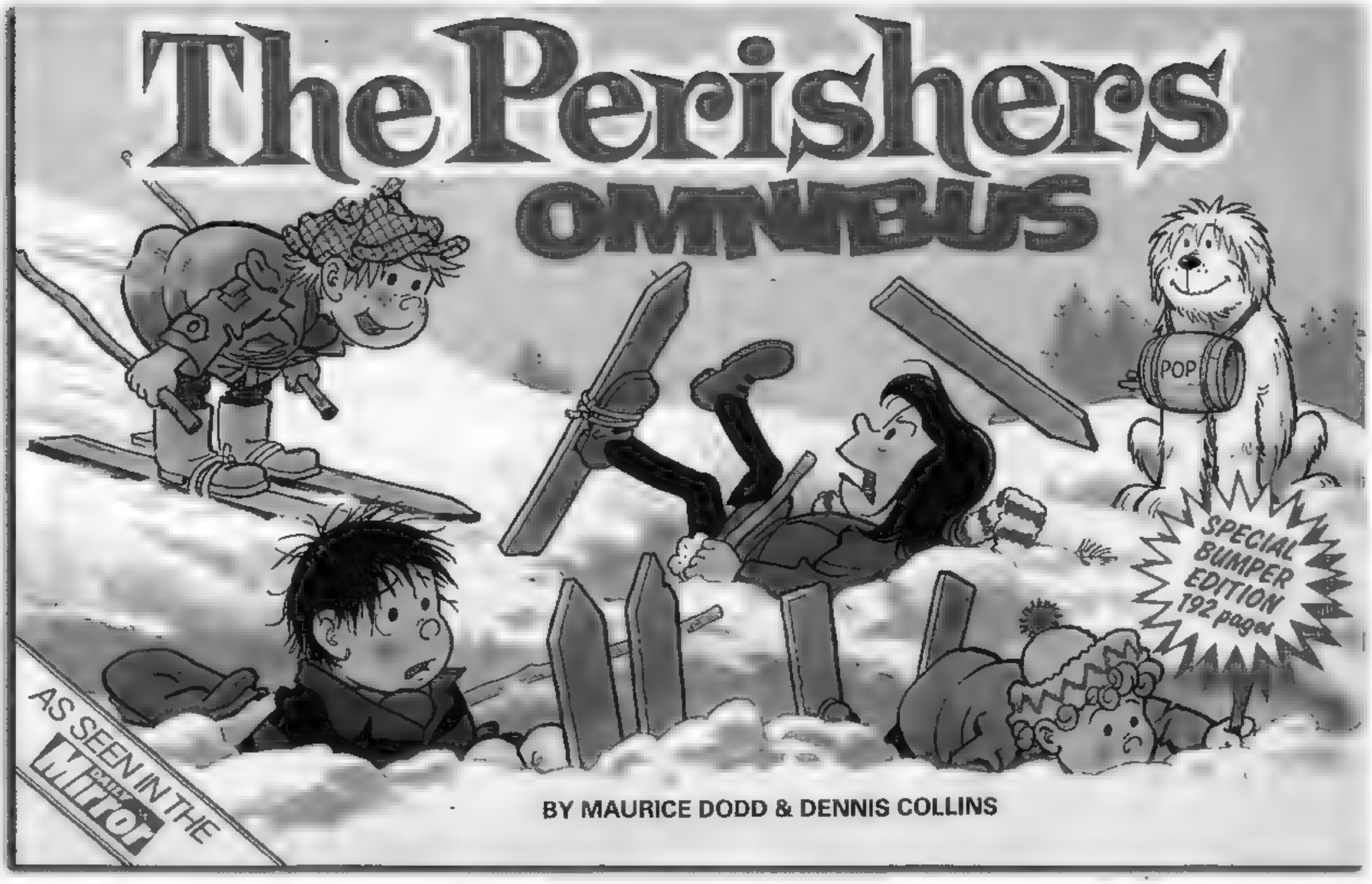
Dirty is probably the most developed of these secondary kid characters, a bizarre individual allergic to soap and water who at first appears to be the most disgusting person you could meet. Until, that is, you meet his cousin Cousin Worsoff, an unseen voice who lives in the sewers and converses with Dirty


WELL GOODBYE AN' GOOD RIDDANCE, SAILOR – DON'T BOTHER TO KNOCK ON MY RINGER AGAIN
GASP GASP PUFF GASP
BOOT OLD FRUIT
I FORK KVA THE WEIGHTY BREATHINGS ?
I'VE BEEN HAVING A BRUSH WITH TATTY OLDBITT (THE SAILORS FRIEND)
AHA! OHO! HEE HEE! NO WONDERING YOUR BREATHS ARE COMING IN STUNTED UNDERWEARS
SHORT PANTS SHORT PANTS
OH YES INDEED – SHE WAS ALWAYS A CLASSY DRESSER
PEACH WITH COFFEE COLOURED LACE TRIMMINGS. PAGE FIVE IN THE JANET REGER CATALOGUE AS I RECALL OR WAS IT?
OHHHH B. H. – I'M NOT HERE TO DISCUSS TATTY OLDBITT'S UNDERWEAR
FOR A START SHE DOESN'T WEAR ANY
GOODNESS GRACIOUSNESS!
YOU SCOUNDER – SPEAKING THUS OF A LADY IN PUBLIC
IF YOU INSIST ON TROTTING OUT A TORRENT OF TORRID TITTLE-TATTLERY I'LL NOT STAND IDLY BY
– I'LL MAKE NOTES ON MY NOTE-PAD
ANOTHER "FIRST" FOR THE WEST GRUNGE CLARION AND DUBIOUS ADVERTISER

THE BALLAD OF THE EYEBALLS IN THE SKY (A CRABBY LAMENT)

There is something up on high which looks down on you and I.
The Eyeballs, the Eyeballs in the Sky.
It's the cosmic peeping Tom, and there's nowhere to hide from
The Eyeballs, the Eyeballs in the Sky.
So you crabs beware of that cosmic stare, there are naughty things you d like to do but you don t dare. And that scrutinising gaze has us living in a daze
The Eyeballs, the Eyeballs in the Sky.
There's no deed we can disguise from them transcendental Eyes
The Eyeballs, the Eyeballs in the Sky.
So we're getting rather short of the Pooliversal sport
The Eyeballs, the Eyeballs in the Sky.
If you don't relate, then they ll seal your fate, and you'll end up spread out on a seafood plate. So we have to nod and smile, though we want to run a mile
From the Eyeballs, the Eyeballs in the Sky.
Because constantly they pry from their umpire seat on high.
The Eyeballs, the Eyeballs in the Sky.
We have changed our crabby ways, and no crabby games we plays
The Eyeballs, the Eyeballs in the Sky.
No prawnography for you or me, or we'll end up in the crabmeat factory, so by night and day we pray they'll up and go away, then we can hide it from the Eyeballs in the Sky!
The Eyeballs, the Eyeballs in the Sky!

From The Perishers Sing *(well, sort of). Lyrics by Maurice Dodd, music by Trevor Evan Jones*



through drains. As we punningly suspect; he is the person who is worse off than you.

HEARD BUT NOT SEEN

The Perishers is a strip that can works on so many levels. Much of the time, it centres around the four kids and their various schoolmates (see sidebars) with the scenes veering between slapstick humour and philosophical musings on the adult world. These musings are sometimes surprisingly topical (though sadly, this tends to date them a little).

When Dodd wants to go off in other directions, though, injecting a little political satire or a touch of saucy innuendo, there are other characters which allow for this approach, so that the kids remain comparatively innocent.

At times, the kids don t appear at all for a couple of weeks!

When an adult point of view is required, more often than not it comes from Boot, and a subset of characters who are effectively his supporting cast. As a dog he cannot be understood by the kids (who mistake his well-reasoned arguments for mere barking), yet is quite worldly wise and frequently irritated by the antics of his fellow animals.

His best friend is an Indian bloodhound, BH Calcutta (failed), who curiously claims to be a reporter for the West Crunge Clarion & Dubious Advertiser (his catchphrase is any news for the newshound?). BH, who speaks like a character from *It Aint Half Hot, Mum* and has no sense of smell (hence the failed in his name), is untrustworthy, devious and unprincipled essentially, a tabloid journalist through and through! Boot can still handle him more easily than he can Tatty Oldbitt (the sailor's friend) a female Bassett hound of loose morals who considers him something of a challenge.

The aristocratic Boot of course, as an 18th Century Milord, is more or less immune to her charms, so she usually ends up going off with BH.

Later, Wellington took in a stray cat, which became Boot s nemesis, and a >

THE BATTLE OF VINDALOO (BH S SONG)

Oh papadoms they were crackling, and Biriani fairly flew, but the Bombay Ducks they stood their ground at the battle of Vindaloo.

The elephants they were loaded, and they knew just what to do.

With a ton of curry in every one, at the battle of Vindaloo.

The enemy charged once, and the enemy charged twice. And then they added ten per cent, it was a fearsome price.

The second Basmati lancers came galloping from the rear, but they passed behind the elephants, which ended their career.

Our gallant men were reeling, they had it pretty rough, from the Sharmi kebabs as thick as crabs, but the Bombay Ducks were tough.

Oh the Sharmi kebabs were as thick as crabs, but the Bombay Ducks were tough.

And by Jupiter-Calcutta-by jingo, saved the lot. He fired off fifty platefuls, by crikey they were hot.

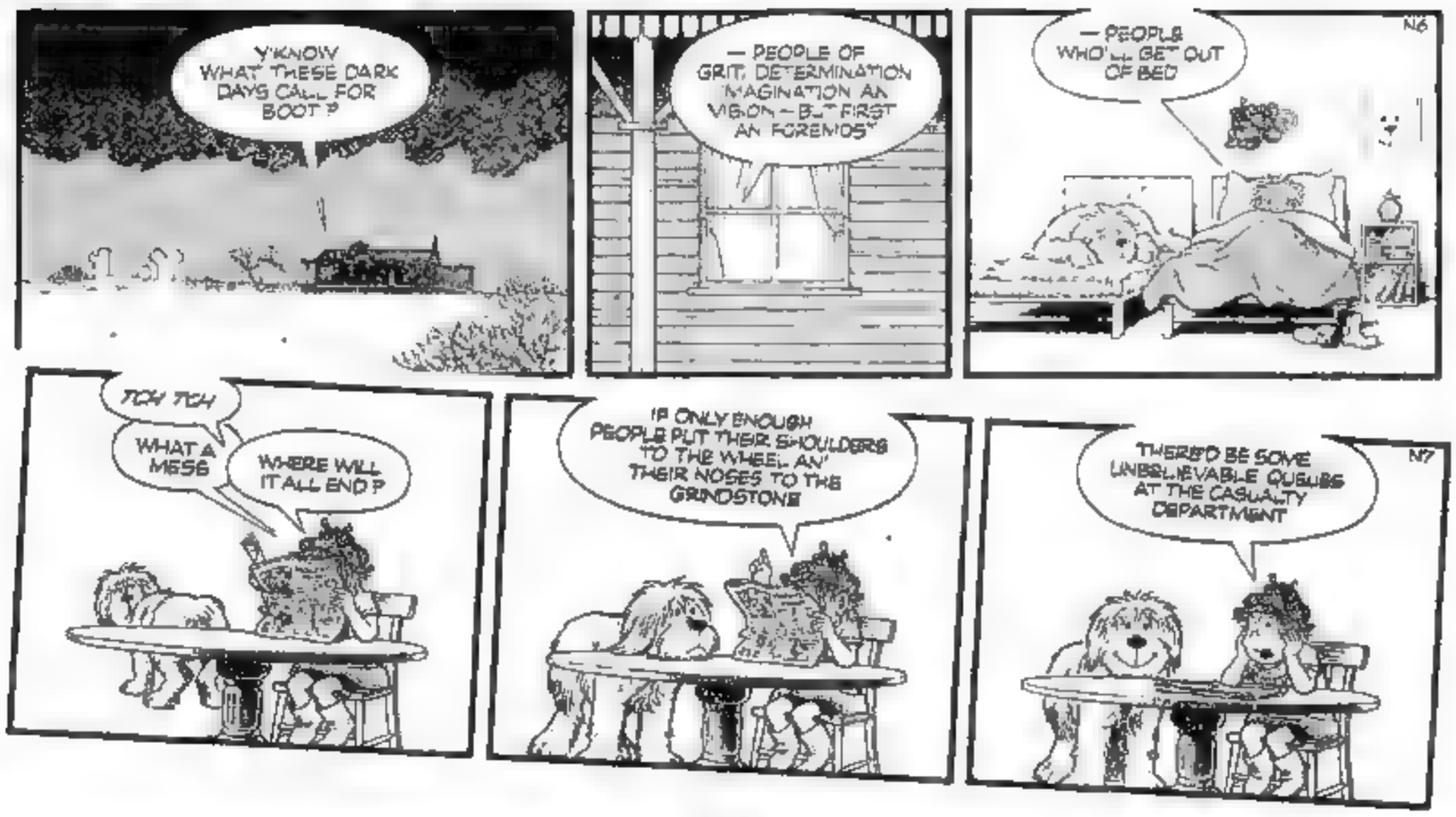
Their tongues and eyeballs steaming the enemy withdrew, they ran like ants and shed their pants at the battle of Vindaloo.

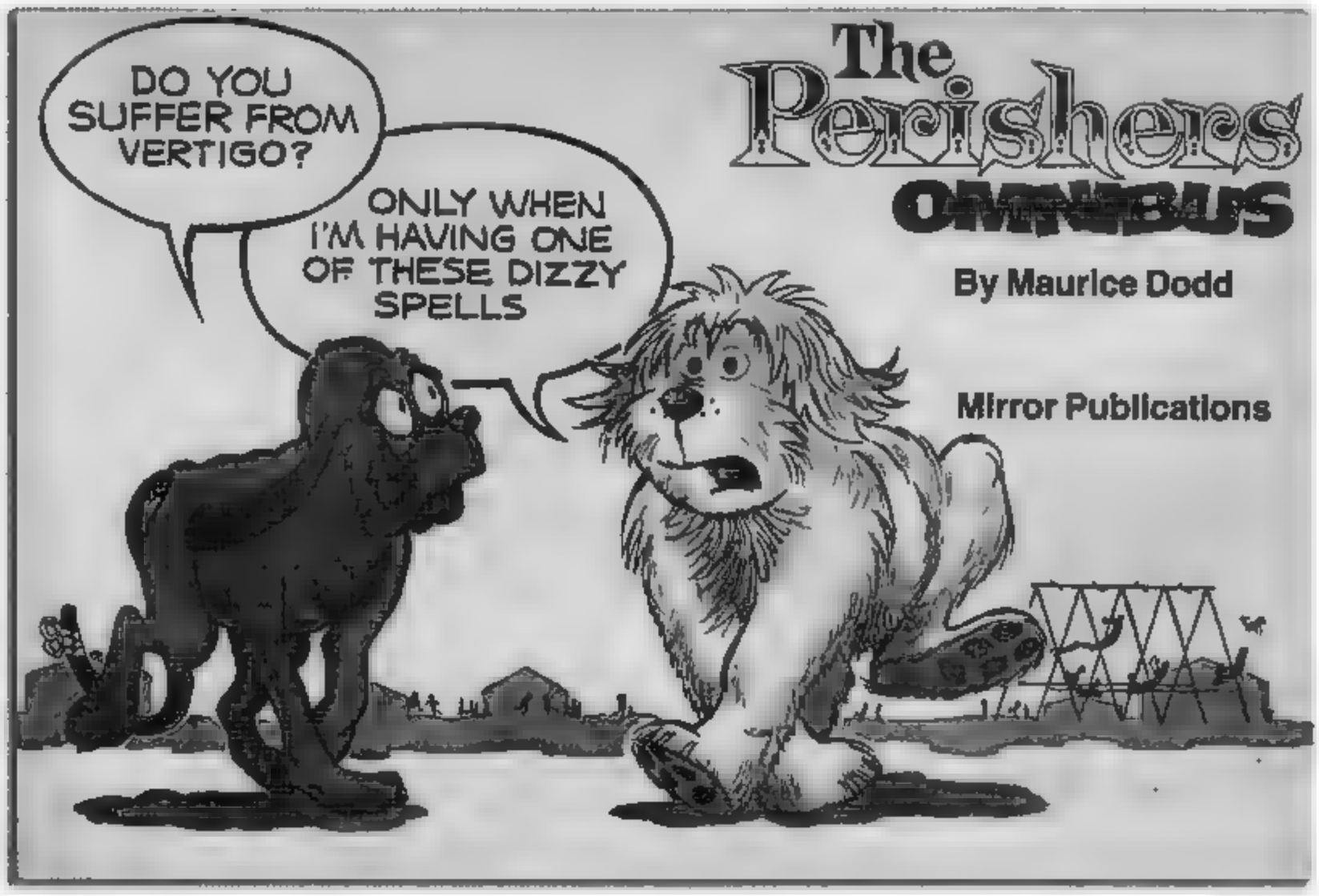
The enemy were routed, it was jolly convenient too, for muffins and tea were being served and for the Bombay Ducks who had never swerved, and the oh so heroical Subhardar who was chota-pegging it by the jar, Hip Hip Hoorah!

And that dog was my great grand-papa.

At the battle of Vin-the battle of Vin-the battle of Vindaloo!

lyrics by Maurice Dodd, music by Trevor Evan Jones


Y'KNOW WHAT THESE DARK DAYS CALL FOR BOOT?
— PEOPLE OF GRIT, DETERMINATION IMAGINATION AN VIS-ON — BUT FIRST AN FOREMOST
— PEOPLE WHO'LL GET OUT OF BED
N6
TCH TCH
WHAT A MESS
WHERE WILL IT ALL END?
IF ONLY ENOUGH PEOPLE PUT THEIR SHOULDERS TO THE WHEEL AN' THEIR NOSES TO THE GRINDSTONE
THERE'D BE SOME UNBELIEVABLE QUEUES AT THE CASUALTY DEPARTMENT
N7



thoughtful goldfish who shared its bowl with a militant water snail employed to clean it (the snail deeply resented this). Others drifted through the strip over the years.

Three recurring characters were Fred the work-shy, bowler hatted socialist beetle and his sidekick, a flat cap-wearing caterpillar whose metamorphosis had been stunted by fags, and Adolph Kilroy, a tortoise who resembled Hitler and who was perpetually set on overthrowing Boot with their aid (it never worked, since he was huge compared to them; usually, a couple of weeks of planning would be undone with one carefully placed paw).

Back in the human world, there was Poor Girl, a fur coat wearing Shirley Temple lookalike who would turn up every Christmas and birthday to try to relieve the penniless Wellington of his presents (he never had any) for the poor (meaning herself). She would demonstrate how poor she was with the litany "I'm poor, my butler's poor, my chauffeur's poor", a rather less than subtle attack on the social inequality of the class system and the evils of taxation.

Crabby politics

Probably the most popular secondary characters, though, were the crabs in the rock pool. Every summer, while the kids holidayed at the seaside, Boot would wander off to peer into the pool and see what the crabs were up to, and every summer the result would be several weeks of pure anarchy. The crabs, lascivious ne er do wells all, inhabit a self contained pooliverse which nonetheless mirrors the wider Britain, and are essentially an excuse for Dodd to indulge in a little social and political satire and at the same time bung in a few mildly dirty jokes.

The link between their world and the rest of the strip, though, is sheer genius: when Boot looks into the pool, all they can see of him are his eyes and nose, and since they have no concept of the world outside, they adopt him as a god!

Every year at about this time, the

Mirror to life

The Perishers wandered through the *Mirror*'s comic pages for decades, and as time went on the observant reader might have begun to notice that certain themes and ideas seem to recur again and again.

Every year, Poor Girl would appear at Christmas. Every year, Tatty Oldbitt would surface in the spring. Every year, the kids (and Boot) would set off on their annual summer camping holiday to *St Moribunds*, get thrown off the train halfway for some never-seen misdemeanour, and get lost walking the rest of the way.

And every year, after Wellington s failed attempt to get Boot into the water and a look in at the rock pool, they'd get thrown off the train again on the way home and arrive back at school several weeks late though nobody ever seemed to care!

Repetitive though these scenarios were, the variations Dodd came up with seemed to be endless. Readers lapped it up; 39 Perishers collections were published over the years, plus several one-off books (including *The Tale of a Tail: the Life & Times of Boot the dog*) and a series of children's books.

There was a short lived animated TV series in 1979 (20 five-minute episodes, chiefly memorable for the late Leonard Rossiter voicing Boot).

There was even an album, 'The Perishers Sing' (well, sort of) narrated by Bernard Cribbins!

Even the retirement of Dennis Collins in 1983 didn't stop it, as Maurice Dodd simply took over drawing as well as writing the strip for a time (later, Bill Mevin, perhaps best known for his 1960s *Dr Who* strips in *TV Comic* came aboard to draw the strip for its last 14 years).

The Perishers were simply a fact of life for generations of *Mirror* readers, and they were seldom less than brilliant.

A sad farewell

On December 31st 2005, Maurice Dodd died of a brain haemorrhage at his Sussex home, aged 83.

The Daily Mirror had several weeks worth of unpublished strips left to run, however, and later published reprints until June 10th 2006. On that date, one final, specially drawn cartoon appeared, showing five familiar silhouettes walking off into the sunset as Wellington told us well, dear readers, it's taken almost fifty years for you to see the back of us. In sayin' goodbye, we hope that you'll remember us with the affecshun we feel for you.

It was the end of an era, and when the Perishers departed, I can't help thinking they took one more small piece of a simpler, gentler Britain with them.

The Perishers

No.27

By Maurice Dodd and Dennis Collins

priest crab invariably proclaims, there appear The Eyeballs in the Sky. We are treated to an annual clash between science and religion. The scientist crab tries to prove that the heavenly orbs are non-existent (usually with some device which the priest hysterically warns will rend the fabric of the Pooliverse). The priest tries to regain control of the gathered crowd of crabby onlookers who, meanwhile, are heckling, grappling amorously with each other and generally enjoying the show below the altar rock.

And every year, after a couple of weeks build-up, it all ends in an almighty punch-up as Boot wanders happily away, blissfully ignorant of the chaos he's wrought. ●

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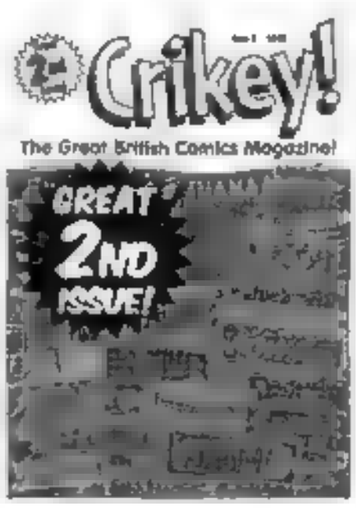
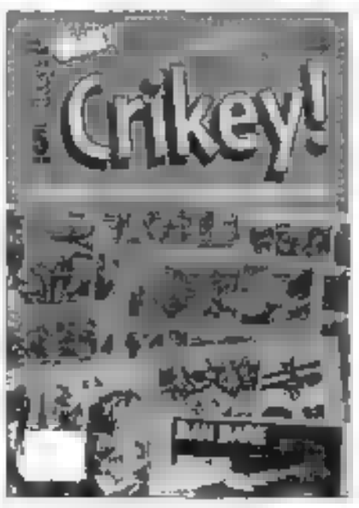
Ken Reid interview
Terrible Toys of Dr Droll
Frank Bellamy
Misty
Wham!



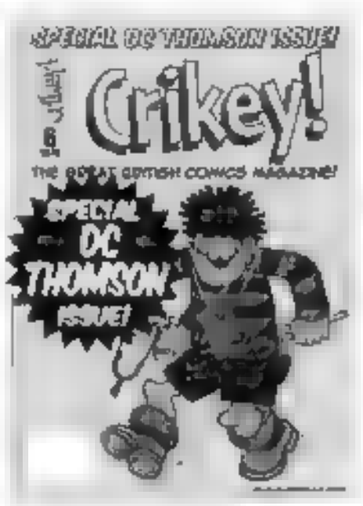
Terry Bave interview
Penelope and I
History of Fleetway
Ron Embleton
Rocket Comic

1950s space comics
Scream
Dez Skinn interview
Don Lawrence
Adam Eterno

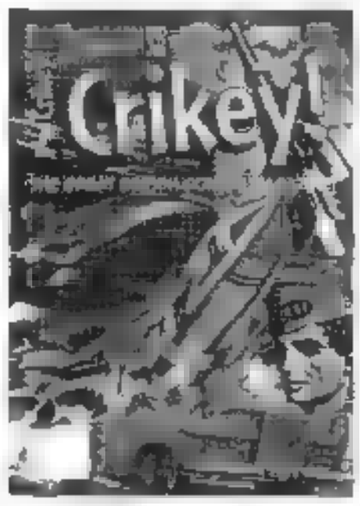
Jinty
1950s horror comics
Mike Noble
Spellbound
Countdown



British Super-heroes
Warrior Magazine
Frank Hampson
Dan Dare
Commando Comic

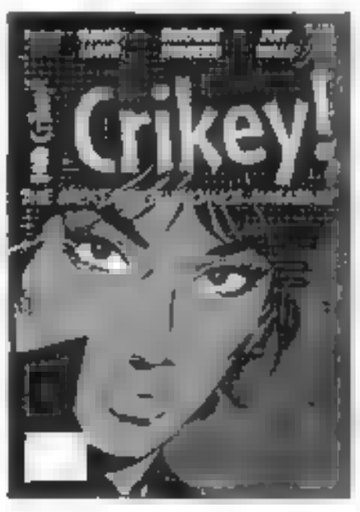


Super Cats & Orphan
Brats
Happy Birthday Beano!
Dudley Watkins
Warlord

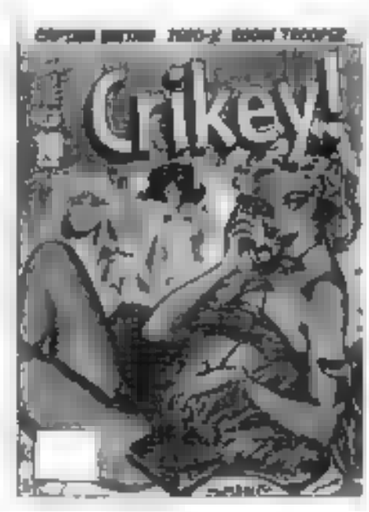


Garth
Graham Bleathman
Billy Bunter
Thunderbirds
Halo Jones

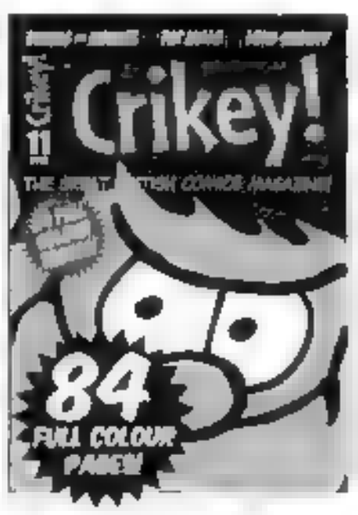
Charley's War
The Phantom in the UK
The Avengers
The Best of British
Birmingham Con 1968



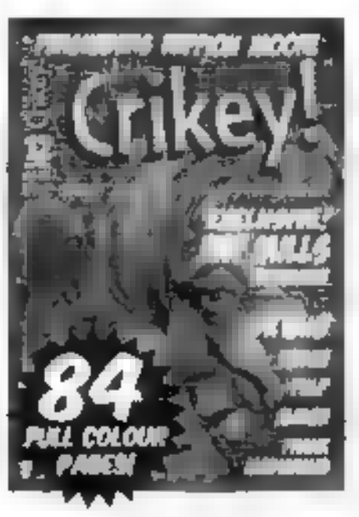
Modesty Blaise
Pat Mills
David Lloyd
Roy of the Rovers
Mighty World of Marvel



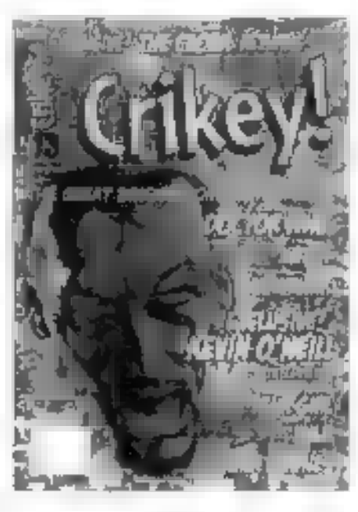
Zero-X
Wicked Wanda
Jane
Captain Britain
Rogue Trooper



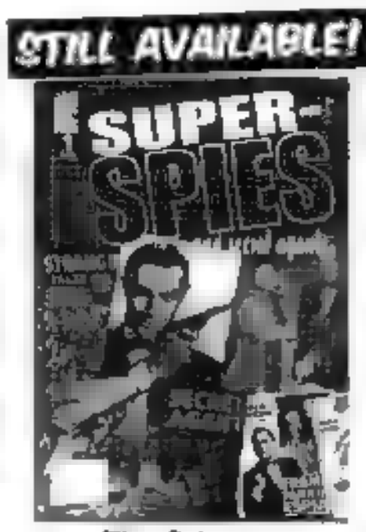
Jeff Hawke
Striker
Marvel UK
Dez Skinn
Dennis the Menace



Doctor Who
Pat Mills
Albion
Leah Moore
John Reppion



Hatch
Kevin O'Neill
Doctor Who
Tank Girl
British Marvel



The Prisoner
SHIELD
Special Agent 21
James Bond
The Champions

THE HISTORY OF BRITISH COMICS

I'm Bryan Talbot, a writer and illustrator of comics who's now faced with the unenviable and frankly impossible task of giving you...

...in *three* pages. Hold onto your hat. Here we go.

After William of Normandy's invasion of England in 1066 his brother, Odo of Bayeux, commissions this astounding example of political propaganda.

The *Bayeux Tapestry* is a piece of English needlework embroidery 230 feet long and is the first known British comic strip.

It uses words and pictures to tell a sequential narrative. Scenes are encapsulated by images of trees or buildings, performing the same function as comic *panel borders* today.

With the advent of printing, satirical broadsheets introduce discrete panels and *speech balloons*.

In the 18th century, William Hogarth tells stories over series of prints, such as *The Rake's Progress*, each print working as a sequential panel. He describes himself as the *author*, rather than the artist, of these prints.

He's a big influence on the father of the modern comic strip, Swiss Rodolphe Töpffer, whose 40-page story, *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck*, is reprinted in Britain in 1840.

Strips influenced by Töpffer appear in *Punch* and its rival, *Judy*, home of the binge drinking layabout *Ally Sloper* who becomes Britain's original ongoing cartoon character, his own comic first appearing in 1875.

Press baron Alfred Harmsworth, noting its success, publishes *Comic Cuts* at half the price (a halfpenny) in 1890 and begins the tradition in Britain of comics as a medium for children.

Radio Fun and *Film Fun*, with heroes such as Arthur Askey and Laurel and Hardy, (who live in *Letsbe Avenue*) are immensely popular in the 1920s and 30s.

From the late 1930s, Brit comics are rocked by the shock of the new: Dundee publisher DC Thomson does away with banks of text beneath each panel and introduces anti-establishment anarchists whose enemies are policemen, park keepers and teachers.

In titles such as *The Beano* and *The Dandy*, the likes of Lord Snooty and *Desperate Dan* by **Dudley Watkins** are eclipsed in the 50s by the work of three mad geniuses – **Davy Law, Leo Baxendale** and **Ken Reid.**

Law's *Dennis the Menace*, Baxendale's *Bash Street Kids* and *Minnie the Minx* and Reid's *Jonah* reinvent the humour strip.

Meanwhile, created by **Rev. Marcus Morris** during the moral panic caused by American horror comics, *The Eagle* raises the British weekly children's comic to new heights of production values and illustration quality.

In glossy photogravure, **Frank Hampson** produces the classic Brit space hero strip *Dan Dare* and **Frank Bellamy** creates photorealist documentaries and stories, such as *Montgomery of Alamein* and *Fraser of Africa*.

Another milestone is **Alfred E Bestall's** *Rupert the Bear*. His stories produced for the hardback annuals bring whimsy and a *ligne claire* style to British comics.

Rupert started life as a newspaper strip by **Mary Tourtell** in the Daily Express in the 20s, a rival to the Daily Mail's *Teddy Tail*.

In the Daily Mirror, *Jane* by **Norman Pett** kept the morale of British troops high during WW2 by losing most of her clothing every day. The squaddie myth that she would appear completely nude on D-Day was fulfilled, thanks to the direct intervention of Churchill.

Andy Capp by **Reg Smythe** is in the Mirror too and is still syndicated all over the world: a British icon.

Other innovative newspaper strips are *Garth* by **Steve Dowling**, *Jeff Hawke* by **Sidney Jordan**, *Modesty Blaise* by **Peter O'Donnell** and *Flook*, drawn by **Wally Fawkes.**

Steve Bell is the spiritual descendant of Gillray and Cruikshank. His strip *If* has run in the Guardian for nearly 30 years.

In the 60s sales of weekly comics fall. Famous comics merge or fold.

The counter-cultural revolution of the 60s brings with it publications such as *International Times* (IT) and *OZ*, both reprinting American *underground comix* by creators such as **Gilbert Shelton** and **R. Crumb**.

IT produces *Nasty Tales* and, after their famous trial, OZ brings forth *Cozmic Comics*.

Underground comix have a profound effect on both sides of the Atlantic, reclaiming comics as an adult medium and influencing a whole generation of writers and artists.

Following the demise of IPC's controversial boys' weekly *Action*, *2000AD* is launched to fill the void. **Pat Mills**, **John Wagner**, **Alan Grant** and others write hard-hitting and satirical adventure strips such as *Judge Dredd*, *Strontium Dog*, *Slaine* and *Nemesis the Warlock*.

Independent comics appear, aimed at adult readers: *Near Myths*, *Pssst!*, *Escape* and, most importantly, *Warrior*, which introduces writer **Alan Moore**. His work brings him to the attention of *Superman* publisher DC who headhunt him to work for American comics.

The first British *graphic novels*, *When the Wind Blows* by **Raymond Briggs** and *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* by...er, *me*, are published in 1982.

The graphic novel boom of the late 80s is spearheaded by Moore's and fellow Brit **Dave Gibbon's** *Watchmen*, **Frank Miller's** *The Dark Knight Returns* and **Art Speigelman's** *Maus*, the first comic to win a Pulitzer.

But the boom runs out of steam. There doesn't yet exist the quantity and range of quality material to develop the nascent public interest in this new form of book

Sales of weeklies decline further and the number of titles diminishes. The vast majority of Brit creators, such as **Neil Gaiman**, now inevitably work for American comics.

Though it's not all gloom, chums. *In the 90s*, *Deadline* scores with its skinhead anti-heroine *Tank Girl* by Jamie **Hewlett** and Alan **Martin**.

In their bedroom, **Simon** and **Chris Donald** produce a humour comic called *Viz*. It goes on to become a multi-million seller.

And today we're in the *Golden Age* of graphic novels. Now there really *is* the huge range of quality books necessary to sustain the growth of the medium.

Now there are graphic novel sections in bookstores and libraries. Mainstream UK publishers such as Jonathan Cape and Harper Collins are publishing original British *GNs*, such as **Posy Simmonds'** *Gemma Bovary*, **Simone Lia's** *Fluffy* and...er, my *Alice in Sunderland!*

You lucky people!

Long considered possibly the definitive British adventure comic, right up to the eve of its launch sixty years ago–despite the continual vigilance of rival Fleet Street publishers –the EAGLE remained a largely well-kept secret. The extraordinary impact of that first issue, and the subsequent early developments, are recalled here by ***David Slinn****. who, with a thirteen-year-old schoolboy's rash optimism, almost overnight decided what the future held...*

Sixty years ago, unlike now, on Good Friday most businesses, offices and shops would be closed for the day, and no national newspapers were published. The solitary newsagent's shop, in our small Sussex village, was just across the road from the lychgate of St Peter and St Paul.

So, almost the only sign of life that morning, was an intermittent trickle of parishioners quietly making their way to and from the early Holy Communion services, then Matins and, commencing at noon, a three hour service of devotions The Stations of the Cross.

Midway through the latter, the choirboys changed shifts with one group replaced by an equal number to pipe their way through the final ninety minutes when, in turn, they too could escape back to the carefree joys of the three-week Easter school holiday.

In all probability, it must have been on the bank holiday Monday. Like youngsters of every generation complaining there was nothing to do, I found myself idly turning the pages of the *Radio Times*. In those days, a somewhat utility letterpress publication listing the BBC sound and television programmes primarily intended for grown-ups, with a weekly circulation in excess of 8.5 million. Therefore, it was quite a surprise, to suddenly be confronted with this whole-page advertisement for a children's comic.

With hindsight, the line drawings appear no better or worse than those to be found in the current issues of *Rover*, *Wizard* or *Champion*, while the gist of the accompanying text went some way to justify the claim: "Something excitingly different...". Unfortunately, my enquiring eyes were drawn like a magnet to two things in particular: the word "PARENTS" and the small visual representation of the new paper's front cover.

Neither seemed to bode well and, on reading the small print again more carefully, a promise of "...20 big pages, 8 of them *in full colour...*" would, I reasoned, invariably turn out to be no bigger than a school exercise book with either just red and blue, or a sort of ration-book green, both haphazardly out of register. Newsagents, railway station bookstalls and Woolworths, up and down the land, were well acquainted with such comics often at twice the price.

The uneven graphics announcing "Great News for Children! *EAGLE* is here!" and "Colour! Adventure! Sport! Interest! Fun!" simply added to the scepticism but, without doubt, it was the slipshod hand-drawn artwork of the comic's cover that decided it. There was no way they were getting threepence of my pocket-money and, that settled, I thought no more about it.

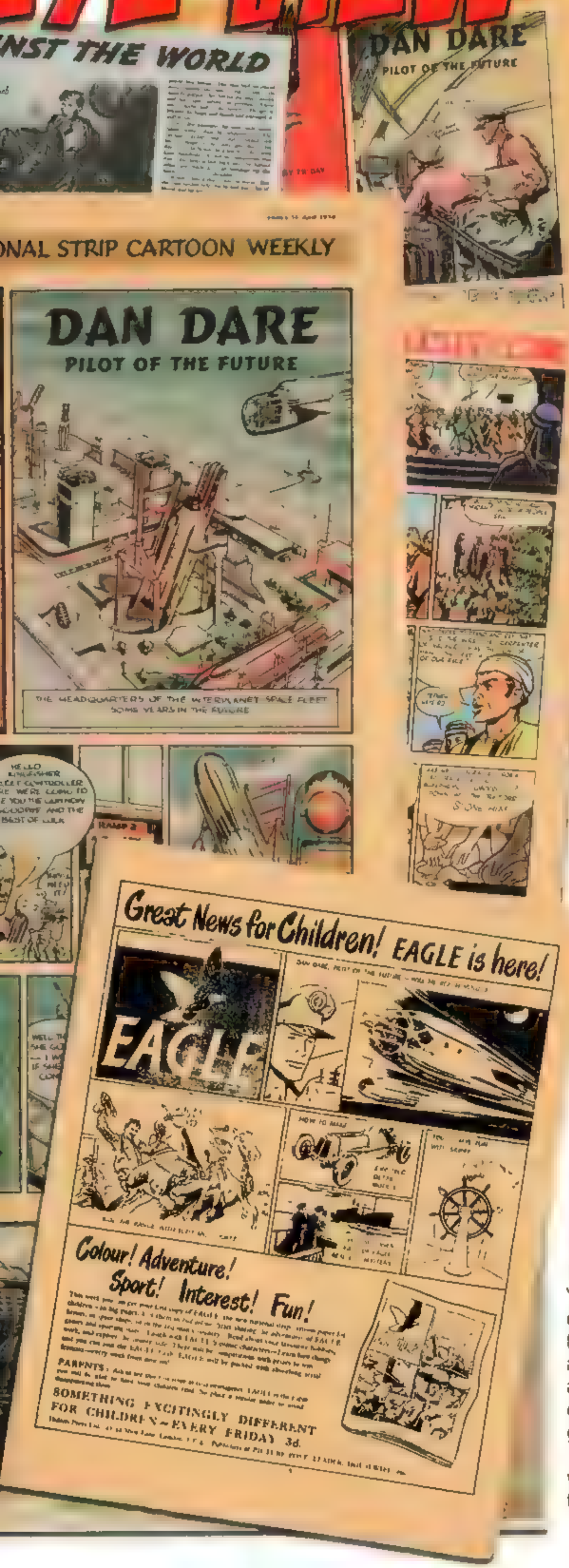
We're all allowed one big mistake? For, the following Friday, 14 April 1950, the morning's activity had very definitely shifted to the opposite side of the road. Mr Selby's regular customers, calling for their daily papers, were augmented by a succession of breathless small boys anxiously proffering tightly-clenched fists, holding an assortment of copper coins, across the counter. Every last one of them, hesitantly, gasping variations of the same request: "Eagle, please?"

Whether they, too, had seen the advertisement or, like me, were simply tipped off as a result of a pal's earlier purchase it was a moment that was to stay in the collective memory for years afterwards. The briefest glimpse of Dicky Medlock's, carefully folded, brightly coloured acquisition, as he urged me not to delay a moment longer was, on its own, enough to overcome those previous forebodings.

On reflection, all too often it is the "product" which fails to live up to the "promise". Here, was that rare occasion where the situation had been completely turned on its head.

Similar in size to a modern tabloid newspaper, across the top of its front cover ran the legend 'EAGLE THE NEW NATIONAL STRIP CARTOON WEEKLY'. Directly below: - a huge scarlet panel, bearing a black and gold eagle flying above the title *Eagle*, in bold white lettering, was positioned alongside a picture of equal size showing an aerial view in real

EYE VIEW


NST THE WORLD
DAN DARE
PILOT OF THE FUTURE
ONAL STRIP CARTOON WEEKLY
DAN DARE
PILOT OF THE FUTURE
THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE INTERPLANET SPACE FLEET SOME YEARS IN THE FUTURE
Great News for Children! EAGLE is here!
EAGLE
Colour! Adventure! Sport! Interest! Fun!
SOMETHING EXCITINGLY DIFFERENT FOR CHILDREN — EVERY FRIDAY 3d.

full-colour of the headquarters of The Interplanet Space Fleet.

This, and the following sequence of seven frames showing the launch procedure for the spaceship "Kingfisher", as it took off on a vital mission to attempt to reach Venus – a distant planet [readers would learn] from which previous expeditions had failed to return bore very little resemblance to the front cover included in the advertisement.

Any lingering misgivings were soon banished, however, by the young man wearing a smart green Space Fleet uniform, gazing skywards as the craft lifted-off the launch ramp. Colonel Dan Dare raised a distinctive eyebrow...and life for hundreds of thousands of British schoolboys – and, as it turned out, their sisters too – was never to be quite the same again.

Space adventures were relatively uncharted territory, so the impact of *Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future* continuing in full-colour on page 2, was considerable. Here, "A week later in Dan Dare's quarters...", we meet the colonel's Lancashire-born batman, Digby, serving a breakfast of vitamin blocks. Thus, helpfully, providing Dan with an opportunity to explain why the Venus expedition is crucial to solving the world's catastrophic food shortages but he is interrupted by an urgent message to report to the Space Fleet Controller, Sir Hubert Guest. Leaving us with a whole week to speculate on what *has* happened to the "Kingfisher"?

On the black-and-white page opposite, perhaps offering a partial explanation for the *Radio Times* advertisement, were *The Adventures of P.C.49*. It was also something of a novelty to have a picture-story based on a popular adult radio series. Most boys, if given a choice, would probably have opted for, the more macho, 'Dick Barton Special Agent'; especially as, this nightly serial's fifteen minutes of mayhem, often attracted criticism in parliament, and also from busybody educationalists or various do-gooders.

Consequently, initial reactions were divided on the possible fate of the small boy on crutches, Jimmy, who while showing kindness to a stray mongrel is run down by a bank robbers' getaway car. Maybe some had an awkward moment or two, but the prospect of the weekly antics of the slightly inept police constable, Archibald Berkeley-Willoughby, were infinitely preferable to an alternative contender.

Namely, 'Norman and Henry Bones the Boy Detectives', whose annoyingly twee exploits were broadcast on Children's Hour. Against sound effects of wind whistling through rustling bushes, hooting owls, crunching gravel, creaking doors and echoing secret passages, the older schoolboy sleuth was played by, a thirty-five-year-old, Charles Hawtrey while Patricia Hayes provided the treble voice of his younger cousin. Simply, no self-respecting lad openly admitted to listening to the tea-time programme.

'Plot Against the World', a text serial written so it appeared, at first glance under a pseudonym, took up most of the following two black-and-white pages. Across the foot of the second of these, a certain *Captain Pugwash* set sail on his not terribly convincing maiden voyage.

An instructional sports strip, *How to Play Cricket with Leary Constantine*, occupied the upper half of page 5; actually spelt Learie, he was a much-respected West Indian Test cricketer who played for Nelson in Lancashire League Cricket. A couple of advertising features, 'A Short History of Writing', sponsored by Biro pens and 'The Ovaltiney's Own Corner of Amusement' filled the lower part. On the opposite page, a factual article 'The Spies Who Saved London', told the story of the German rocket base at Peenemünde. *Professor Brittain Explains: Radar* took up the whole of page 7, and very cleverly described in both words and pictures how it worked.

A western story being almost obligatory in a boys' paper, the middle four-page colour section opened with *Seth and Shorty Cowboys*; even so, these colour drawings provided a fresh perspective. But it was the centre-spread itself that delivered the biggest surprise, with a full-width cutaway illustration showing a gas turbine-electric locomotive thundering out of a railway tunnel. Below, slightly at odds with this technical innovation, was a humorous cartoon strip *Skippy the Kangaroo* its origins were partly given away by the strange Belgian syndication credits. Even odder, maybe, the kangaroo failed to put in an appearance at all.

The next colour page was also divided between two contrasting features. *Heroes of the Clouds* set out to tell the history of the development of flight; while the habits of the >

humble hedgehog came under scrutiny in *Discovering the Countryside* by John Dyke.

Then black-and-white pages begin again on page 13, with 'The Lost Liner' opening a series of *Real Life Mysteries*. Beneath this: Billy Steel, the Scottish international footballer, advising *"Here's MY way to cross a road"*, shared the space with 'Cadburys Corner Quiz'. A couple of illustrated features take up page 14, *Making Your Own Model Racing Car* and *Sporting Personalities*; the first sportsman chosen being, the Blackpool and England inside-forward, Stanley Mortenson.

Next came *The Eagle Club and Editor's Page*, with an introductory letter from the editor carefully explaining the paper's plans to involve readers through the *Eagle Club* and various special activities; this page also included 'Competition Corner' and, a three-panel cartoon strip, '*Chicko*' by Thelwell.

On the following page was Chapter 1 of a second text serial. Set in Australia, '*Lash Lonergan's Quest*' continued over onto page 17, together with advertisements for the 'Army Apprentice School' and 'Trick Time for Rowntree's Gumsters'.

On the last black-and-white page, there was another adventure strip, *Rob Conway*: having earlier left little Jimmy unconscious, at the foot of page 3, here we had a youthful ATC cadet rushing down a dark alley to the assistance of a one-armed man, who is being heavily coshed and robbed.

Below this feature, the more curious amongst us may have spotted in very tiny print, a little bit of a conundrum: "...EAGLE MAGAZINE with which is incorporated THE MERRY-GO-ROUND..." and that the comic was being printed in Liverpool.

However, it's much more likely that everyone's eyes had already been drawn to the full-colour strip story on the facing page. In a suburban street a small group of spectators watch as a new jet airliner passes overhead during a test flight. Suddenly, it becomes obvious that the plane is in difficulties. A fair-haired boy, wearing Wellington boots, quietly detaches himself from the crowd, apparently deep in thought. After shaping his thumbs and forefingers into a "W", he immediately soars skywards to alight on a critically damaged wing and holds the jagged break together while the plane makes a successful emergency landing. Swooping through the air once more, now with the astonished pilot in tow, the pair swiftly detain the escaping spy responsible for the sabotage.

Walls Ice Cream Presents: Tommy Walls the Wonder Boy, clearly lived up to the *Radio Times* advert's promise of "Something excitingly different...". With sweets still rationed and requiring coupons, the appeal of Tommy's astounding accomplishment being simply down to "...the extra energy from that super delicious Wall's I had for lunch..." was an imaginative marketing campaign. This sponsored strip also provided another *first* the penultimate frame contained a neatly lettered signature: Frank Hampson. Of course, its presence had yet to take on any special significance.

It was certainly unusual for a post-war children's publication to contain such a high proportion of advertising content. Though, in addition to the 'Wall's Ice Cream' colour page, no less than four out of the half-dozen quarter-page adverts took the form of either an interest feature or some kind of entertainment.

After eagerly perusing the nineteen pages, variously offering: a glimpse into the future, adventure stories and features both past and present, a laugh or two, together with a look at science and technology on the back cover, a tougher test of schoolboy susceptibility awaited. *The Great Adventurer* abruptly faced us with a depiction of events leading up to the imminent stoning of Stephen, in a retelling of the story of Saul of Tarsus. Even so, those who initially weren't sure quite what to make of it, ended up grudgingly admitting a bible story, or not it was none the worse for that.

On turning back to page 15, it was easy to tell that The Editor had anticipated there might be some sort of reaction along these lines and, therefore, clearly understood just how essential it was to gain the readers' confidence right from the start: "EAGLE, as you can see, is an entirely new kind of strip-cartoon paper and it looks as though there's going to be a very big demand for it. So I suggest you ask your newsagent to order a copy for you each week. At the bottom corner of this page, you will find a form which you can cut out and hand to your newsagent. If you want to make sure of your copy fill it in straight away."

The effect of this solicitous approach was immediate. As a result many thousands of corners *were* cut from the first issue and, alas, one-hundred-and-twenty-seven words of the quest Lash Lonergan set out on, also went walkabout to the chagrin of later serious comic collectors. However, it was the last *eleven* words in the next paragraph of these opening remarks that caught my imagination: "I'm sure you will agree that EAGLE is really good value for 3d. We are using only the best authors and the best artists."

While there was no way of knowing whether the author of 'Plot Against the World' was pseudonym aside "the best", I'd recognised the illustrations as being by Alexander Oliphant, who contributed quite regularly to magazines like *John Bull* and *Everybody's Weekly*. The interest feature, 'The Lost Liner', struck me as very similar to the work of a book illustrator, William Stobbs. Also, both the drawings and signature, on the cricket strip and sports

CRICKET COACHING BY LEARY CONSTANTINE
THIS WEEK THE STANCE
STANCE (1) LEFT HAND GRIP MUST BE EASY
STANCE (2) HOW NOT TO DO IT STANCE IS BAD
STANCE (3) ELBOW WELL POINTED OVER LEGS AND FEET CREATES EASY MOVEMENT
STANCE (4) A GOOD POSITION
BACK LIFT (5) LIFT YOUR BAT STRAIGHT GRIP NOT TOO TIGHTLY — LOOSELY BUT FIRMLY
FOLLOW THROUGH (2) MUST BE CONTROLLED AND KEPT STRAIGHT
FOLLOW THROUGH CONTROLLED (3) THE END OF A MOVEMENT
THE STANCE EASY DOES IT
NEXT WEEK THE MAIN DEFENSIVE STROKE

feature were familiar; this time from story illustrations attributed to Denis Alford in *Woman's Weekly*.

The writers, Alan Stranks (creator of P.C.49) and Bernard Newman, an espionage expert, were well-established names; the latter also a regular radio broadcaster, tending to suggest the editorial claim was not exaggerated. Indeed, far from it, "the best" was yet to come...

Despite it being the last week of the school holidays, that following Friday morning couldn't arrive quickly enough. The impatient rush to Mr Selby's shop began very early and just as well it did. Copies of *Eagle* No.2 were in short supply and, it was quickly discovered, had fewer pages as well only sixteen; though, still eight in colour.

Obviously, some features were missing, like 'Professor Brittain' and the real-life spy articles, but this allowed time to examine everything else more closely. My curiosity was aroused on finding that Frank Hampson's signature was not only on the *Tommy Walls* strip, as our young hero dives into a fast-flowing river to rescue a drowning chum, but it also appeared on *Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future*, where the "Kingfisher" is lost in a devastating explosion. However, perhaps even more intriguing, it looked very probable that *Rob Conway* and *The Great Adventurer* were also being drawn by this same artist.

The second of L Ashwell Wood's centre-spread illustrations, a cutaway of a refrigerated cargo liner, was even more impressive than the first. In extraordinary detail, both above and below decks, there were well over 2,270 individual items of cargo shown stored in the ship's chilled holds; more than 500 sides of frozen mutton alone. Yet, as previously, not even a single kangaroo managed to hop across the cartoon strip below. Although, turning the page, a sheep, a cockerel and a duck find themselves lifting off aboard the Montgolfier brothers' first hot-air balloon in 1783, and a moorhen has its habitat examined by John Dyke.

In the wider world, *Eagle* No.2 was clearly living up to the phenomenal response to the first issue. Increasingly becoming *the* subject of discussion, amongst not only youngsters but adults too. Such was the level of paternal interest that, without any pestering and a rare absence of even feigned resistance, the comic would be quietly added to Friday morning's paper delivery.

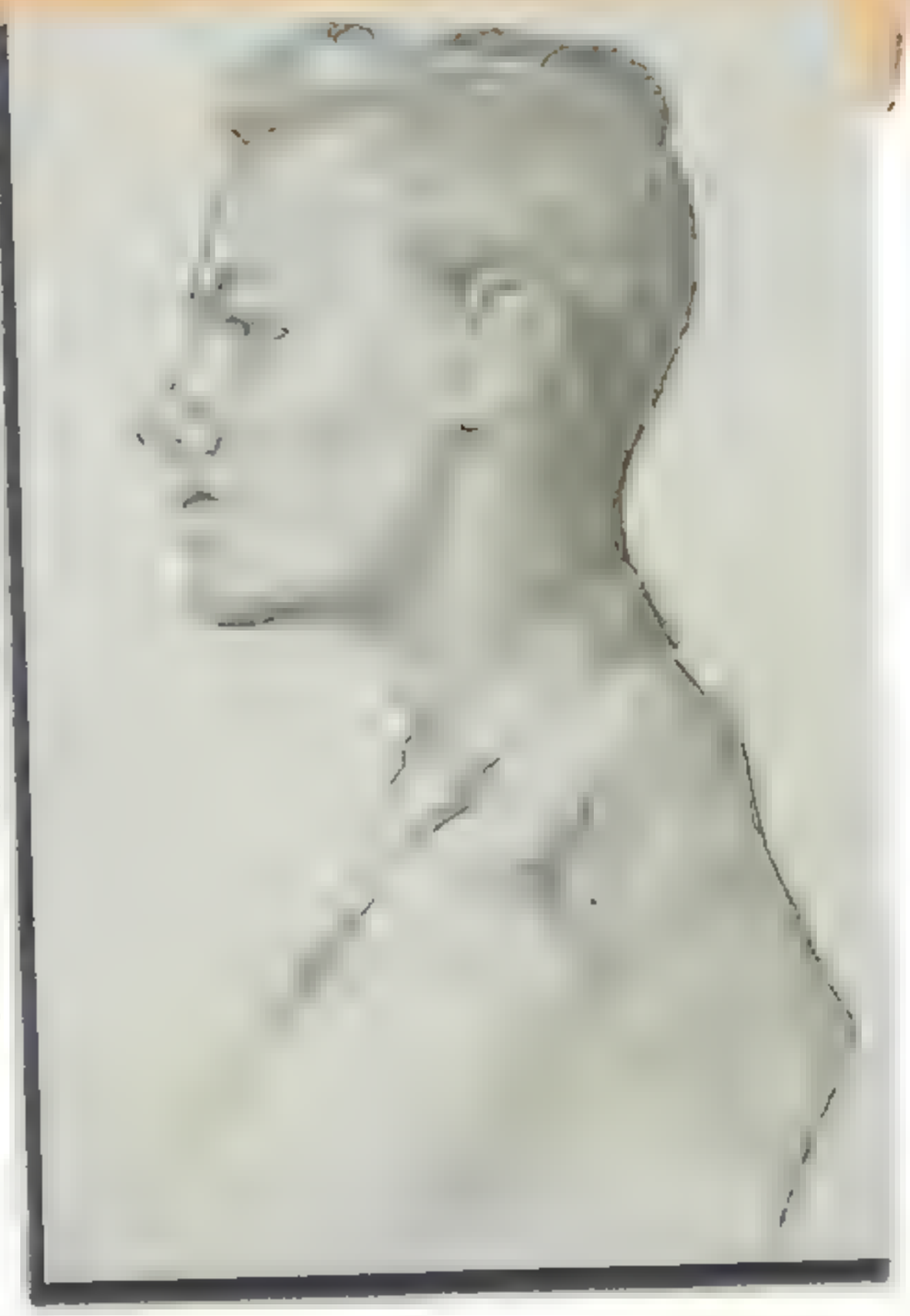
In the half-page advertisement that appeared in the *Radio Times*, dated 28 April 1950, the copywriters set out compelling reasons why prospective readers should act quickly to avoid disappointment. Yet, this persuasive pitch is woefully let down by the use of the identical inaccurate hand-drawn "front cover" leaving, even if unintended, an incongruous puzzle that endured for over five decades.

A possible explanation finally emerged, in the spring of 2009, as the result of a series of odd happenings at a Cirencester auction house. But that's a story for a future issue of *Crikey!*.

Adding emphasis to the advert's message, in Eagle No.3 the editor's letter explained that a combination of demand and paper shortages meant alternate issues would be restricted to just sixteen pages. Initially this caused some dismay, but few actual complaints as long as the comic kept its Friday appointment with us, most were more than content to accept the promise to include extra pages as and when the situation improved.

This twenty-page issue revealed that it was indeed Frank Hampson who was responsible for not only *Dan Dare* and *Tommy Walls*, but also the back-page story of Saul of Tarsus perhaps not surprisingly, the *Rob Conway* strip was now being drawn by Harold Johns. On the cover, Dan, Sir Hubert and Digby, set off on a helicar journey that is destined to last the whole of page 2, *and* most of the next episode. The second real-life spy story was illustrated by Winslade, another artist whose work I'd previously seen elsewhere. A new half-page humorous cartoon strip, *Grandpa*, was stylishly drawn by Probyn. This week's cutaway, again by Ashwell Wood, showed the inner-workings of a London Underground train.

The following week, in *Eagle* No.4, he turned his attention to the new De Havilland "Comet", producing an impression of the plane's interior well in advance of it actually going into passenger service. Of the marsupial star of the 'Skippy' cartoon strip there was no sign whatever. Meanwhile, still piloting the helicar, Colonel Dare works out that it may have been impulse rays that destroyed the "Kingfisher". Immediately, urgent work commences on building a new type of rocket ship which will use a different method of propulsion. Another landing will then be attempted by >



LEFT: INTERESTINGLY, BOTH THE BATMAN AND THE BATSMAN HAIL FROM LANCASHIRE. FRANK HAMPSON AND DENIS ALFORD PROVIDE THE ARTWORK
ABOVE: FRANK HAMPSON'S THIRD EPISODE OF 'THE GREAT ADVENTURER'
BELOW: NORMAN DICKINSON'S PENCIL SKETCH OF DAVID SLINN (C1950)

launching the craft from a mother space-ship, "Ranger", in orbit around Venus.

Naturally enough, as the various stories and features became established, a few were clearly more popular than others. *Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future* provided the majority of talking points or implausible speculation while *Professor Brittain*, the cutaways, the nature and sports features, and the back-page bible strip, attracted the most favourable comments from suitably impressed schoolteachers.

During batting practice in the nets, the senior art master, Norman Dickinson wryly remarked that, after a couple of weeks of studious defensive strokes, the late cut had suddenly become the chosen shot for even the straightest delivery. Having previously played cricket himself in Lancashire, he'd some first-hand experience of the legendary Learie Constantine and, as I later learned at his elbow, the world of advertising agencies and graphic illustration as well.

Also in the fourth issue, having chanced upon crooks about to derail an express train carrying gold bullion, Tommy Walls flies alongside the track to warn the driver aboard the fast-approaching locomotive of the impending danger. This second dramatic airborne dash was as it happened also his last levitation. Henceforth, Tommy had to be content to hypnotise an escaping circus tiger by shining a torch in its eyes, save a boat from sinking in a storm, prevent a conman from crashing a stolen turbo-car and, in his pyjamas with torch at the ready again, bring the dazzled burglar down with a rugby tackle.

Around the middle of May, shortly after Master Walls' own railway adventure, something that seemed very close to a real disaster occurred during the morning train journey to school. In *Eagle* No.5, the *Dan Dare* story had moved on three months. With the newly-built rocket ships now under test, Dan greets his old friends, Hank Hogan and Pierre Lafayette, as they arrive to join the Venus expedition. Leaving just a government appointed professor to turn up and, with Sir Hubert and Digby, complete the exploration team. This pivotal development in the story quickly became the hot topic. In the midst of the usual banter, Dicky Medlock quietly mentioned his dad had recently read, in the *Daily Telegraph*, something to the effect that the Hulton Press had announced the appointment of a clergyman to be the editor of *Eagle*.

For us, with not even half-a-dozen issues yet read, this quite unexpected turn of events seemed to imply significant and, we vehemently agreed, totally unnecessary changes were in the offing. Worse still, it didn't take much imagination to fear what radical form they might take? In that moment, it could be said that our amusement at Sir Hubert's cantankerous behaviour, in having a female scientist, Professor Jocelyn Peabody, imposed upon the Venus expedition from on high, swiftly turned into mutually shared exasperation.

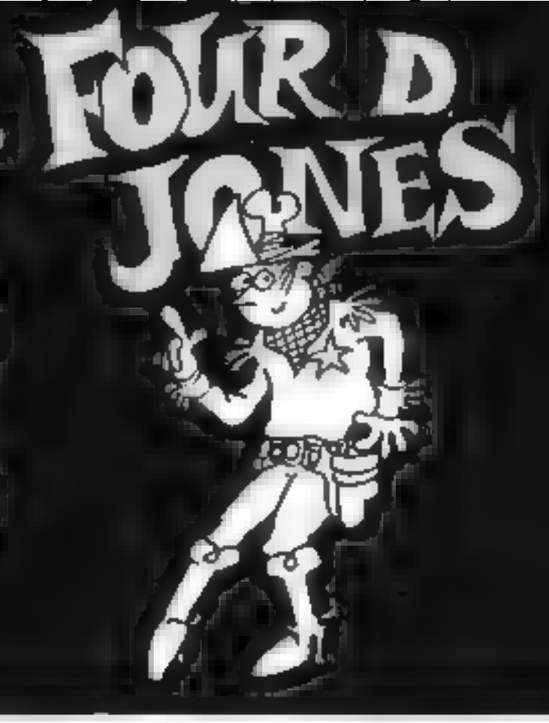
Thirteen-year-old schoolboys, while perhaps not particularly clued-up about the complexities of magazine publishing, did possess a rudimentary grasp of Greek literature. Euripides had, with amazing foresight, jotted down on a clay tablet: "*Whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad*". The despondent conclusion was, that for some quite inexplicable reason, the management at the Hulton Press had apparently taken leave of their senses.

TO BE CONTINUED...

AVIATION, HIBERNATION, JOLLIFICATION AND SIR HUBERT'S EXASPERATION, AS FRANK HAMPSON STARTS TO GET INTO HIS STRIDE ON 'DAN DARE: PILOT OF THE FUTURE' IN EAGLE NO.5

PETER MADDOCKS'

Peter Maddocks was born in Birmingham on 1 April 1928. In 1939 he won a scholarship to the Moseley School of Art in Birmingham and later became a leading cartoonist, contributing to many of the UK's leading Daily and Sunday newspapers in a distinguished career. Among his creations he can boast The Family Ness, Penny Crayon and Jimbo and the Jet Set for the BBC. Retired and now living in southern Spain, Peter has put down his pencil in favour of a paint brush and canvas. Presented here is the second part of his creation 'Four D Jones', which ran from 1955 to 1965 in the Daily Express. For more of Peter's current work check out his website: http://www.petermaddocks.com



Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS

THE POSTMASTER INTRODUCES JONES TO VINCENT, AN ARTIST WHO OFFERS JONES A ROOM IN HIS HOUSE...

NOW, MY YOUNG FRIEND, WHAT IS YOUR PROFESSION?

HE'S AN ADVENTURER

WELL, MY ADVENTUROUS FRIEND, YOU MAY HAVE THIS ROOM

J.1094

SPLENDID, I KNEW I COULD RELY ON YOU, VINCENT. NOW I CAN GET ON WITH MY WORK

Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS

VINCENT PAINTS PORTRAITS - THAT'S MINE

HOW NICE

J1095

YES, AND YOU, MY YOUNG FRIEND, CAN SIT FOR ME. I AM IN A PAINTING MOOD

WELL, THIS IS THE MOST PEACEFUL STORY I'VE GOTTEN INTO YET - IT'S LIKE A HOLIDAY

SIT STILL, JONES, I'VE ALMOST FINISHED

Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS

JONES SITS FOR VINCENT AND HAS HIS PORTRAIT PAINTED

IS THAT ME? BUT THAT'S NOT MY HAT

NO, THERE'S NO FEELING IN THAT TRIANGULAR THING OF YOURS

J 1096

... SO I DECIDED TO CHANGE IT, *OH DEAR* **IKABOD** IS ABOUT

CLUNK

CLUNK

HELLO, IS THAT YOU IKABOD?

YETH, AND I'VE GONE AND DONE IT AGAIN!

Four D. Jones
BY MADDOCKS

A VERY WORRIED LITTLE MAN NOW APPEARS ON THE SCENE...

VINCENT, MY DEAR FELLOW, I FEAR I HAVE DONE IT AGAIN

J1097

OH, NOT AGAIN, IKABOD, THE TIMES I'VE WARNED YOU ABOUT THIS

YETH! BUT THIS TIME THERE'S ABOUT FOUR OF THEM

SUDDENLY, FOUR MORE 'IKABODS' APPEAR IN THE DOORWAY OF HIS STUDIO

TO BE CONTINUED...

Lew Stringer has been working in comics since the early 80s, one of those rare individuals to graduate from fanzine creator to professional artist, due to a combination of talent and a tireless enthusiasm for the medium. He is the creator of Brickman, Tom Thug and Combat Colin, amongst others, and is also now the writer of one of the most popular blogs about comics on the internet. Read on...

LEW STRINGER

Crikey!: *So, how did you get into comics, Lew? You followed the fanzine route...*

Lew: I liked comics right from when I first saw them when I was four years old, reading *The Dandy* and *TV21* in 1964/65. I started drawing my own comics when I was seven. Nothing spectacular though, just crudely scribbled things featuring family pets. I did those comics throughout my childhood, just to show my parents and a few friends really, and improved my drawings gradually, but I never considered a career in comics until I quit my dead-end office job in 1980.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s comic fanzines were the equivalent of today's message boards and websites. Lots of us started out contributing to fanzines–people such as Dave Gibbons, Dez Skinn, and Kev O'Neill. They predated me slightly but I was part of the'second wave' of people such as John Freeman and Graham Bleathman who broke into comics through fanzines. I contributed to *Fantasy Advertiser*, *The Owl's Effort*, etc and produced my own 'zines (*After Image*, *Metamorph*, and *Fantasy Express*). I also published my own stripzines (we didn't call them 'small press publications' back then) featuring my Batman spoof, *Brickman*. These were sold either via mail order (by advertising in other fanzines) or at comic marts or in comic shops. I also talked a local newsagent into taking copies on a sale or return basis.

None of the 'zines made a profit but it was all good experience, both in terms of drawing practice and receiving feedback, some from comics pros who encouraged me to send samples to publishers. After a few years of rejection letters from just about everyone from IPC to DC Thomson to my local newspaper, Alan Moore introduced me to Bernie Jaye at Marvel UK who gave me my first break.

ABOVE: DON'T MESS WITH COMBAT COLIN

C: *What was your first professional job? I think I first became aware of your work through the* Transformers *title, though I'm sure that wasn't your first work for Marvel.*

"WHAT'S HE GETTING ALL STEAMED UP ABOUT?"

L: Close. My very first published pro work was a series of monthly pocket cartoons. I came up with a series of 'What If' illustrations depicting Marvel heroes in a literal sense, and 'What If Iron Man lived up to his name?' appeared in Marvel UK's The *Daredevils* No.7 in 1983, showing him as a living steam iron! About half a dozen other 'What If's' followed. Marvel only paid me five pounds for each cartoon, but it was a start and I couldn't have been happier if I'd been paid a million quid. (*Note to editors: No, I wouldn't work for a fiver today. Ha ha.*)

C: *You're a comics' historian as well as a creator so I'm guessing you've always been a fan of the medium. What would you say are your primary influences as a creator, and your personal favourites-strips or creators-as a fan?*

L: I wouldn't say I was a historian compared to the depth of knowledge that Paul Gravett, Steve Holland or the late Denis Gifford have displayed but I am interested in the whole history of comics. It always surprises me when some collectors don't show any interest in comics outside of their personal nostalgia era.

My primary artistic influence was Mike Higgs, whose work I really enjoyed when I was a kid reading 'The Cloak' in *Pow! (see Crikey! 13)*. When I started out in the industry I actually worked as Mike's assistant for a few months, ghosting his style on a series of *Moonbird* children's books for America, and inking some of his *Moonbird* strips for Germany–all great experience for a young cartoonist.

Other influences would be Leo Baxendale, Ken Reid, Jack Kirby, and Roy Wilson, although there's probably not a lot of evidence of that in my work.

As for favourite creators, I'd have to include the people I've just

mentioned plus Mike Noble, Kevin O'Neill, Bill Everett, Alan Moore, Pat Mills, John Wagner, Dave Gibbons, Jack Oliver, Laura Howell, John Buscema, Lise Myhre, Jaime Smart, Dudley Watkins...too many to mention. I still buy loads of comics as I think it's important to keep up with developments in the field you work in.

C: *Give us a quick (or indeed not so quick) rundown of your career–you seem to have worked for most of the comics publishers around since the eighties notably on fan favourites like Oink.*

L: Yeah, the *What If* cartoons led to more freelance work for Marvel UK, creating the *Robo-Capers* strip for *The Transformers*, and *Combat Colin* for *Action Force*, then a few strips 'ghosting' other artists for the IPC annuals, and in 1986, creating *Tom Thug* and *Pete and His Pimple* for *Oink!* 'Tom Thug' became very popular and transferred over to *Buster* when *Oink!* folded. Looking back, I had a very fortunate start in the comics industry; I was creating exactly the sort of strips I wanted and basically being left to my own devices by these major publishers. It was the type of material they were looking for and it was proving to be successful. Throughout most of my career I've written my own material so that degree of control was very appealing too, and it's easier for editors if they only have one person to deal with on a strip.

ABOVE: MORE COLIN

Tom Thug ran for ten years, then another few years as reprint (when *Buster* was on its way out). I also branched out into other comic material, the most notorious of which being the *Norma Snockers* strip for the *Sunday Sport* in 1989. Work on *Viz* comic was other adult work, a bit more tasteful and socially relevant than the *Sport* work had been. I took over the artwork duties (and often the script work) on *Felix and His Amazing Underpants*, *The Pathetic Sharks*, and *Suicidal Syd* for *Viz*, as well as creating my own character, *Tranny Magnet*.

Expanding in other directions I've also worked as a writer on the pre-school magazine *CiTV Tellytots*, creating new photo-strips based on screen grabs and before that as a writer on *Sonic the Comic*, Egmont's most successful comic of the 1990s. I've been freelancing for Egmont (or its previous incarnations Fleetway and IPC) since the 1980s and for the past six years I've been writing/drawing *Team Toxic* for their popular *Toxic* magazine.

Some cartoonists take on commercial jobs for various companies but throughout my career I've managed to make a living exclusively from comics.

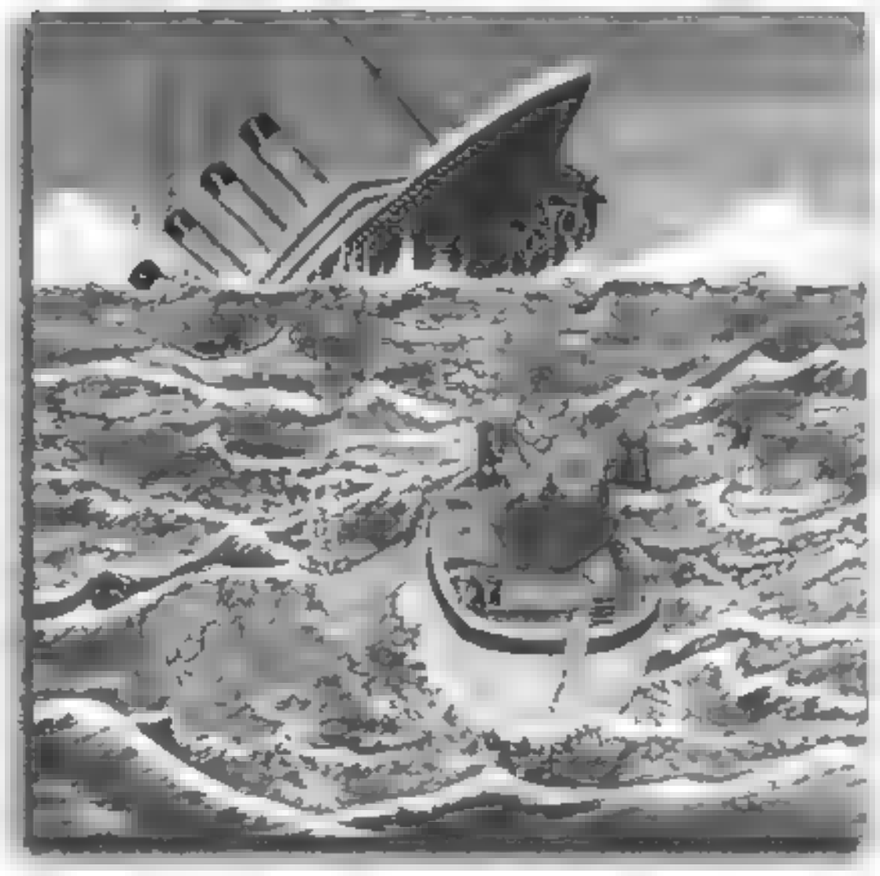
C: *You're not easy to stick into a single category. What do you think has been your personal favourite job?*

L: I've pretty much enjoyed every strip I've worked on but 'Combat Colin' remains my favourite. From the days when I read *Eagle Eye* and *The Cloak* in the Odhams comics I always felt that UK comics needed to include more comedy-adventure serials. It's a genre that's popular in Europe and it should also work here. Anyway, I got my chance to do that with *Combat Colin*, gradually moving it away from a slapstick gag strip into comedy-action serials that ran for several parts. It's a good way to bring in more character development too, and I >

BELOW: LEW'S STRANGE TAKE ON THE MARVEL CHARACTERS...

was able to expand the cast of the strip to include recurring villains, companions etc. Creating bizarre villains with their daft world-threatening schemes is always fun too, and broadens the scope away from the traditional kid-with-gimmick strip that, frankly, made many humour comics boring from my viewpoint.

I own the rights to 'Combat Colin' so I'll be reviving him one of these days. I put him into the *Brickman* strip in *Elephantmen* recently but he needs his own strip really.



SPOILT BASTARD

C: *There's an anarchic feel to much of your stuff. Whether it's Tom Thug, Brickman or Combat Colin, It's not what you'd call restrained. Have you always had a flair for that kind of slightly OTT humour?*

L: I think so. I can understand why readers can relate to certain more provincial smiley-kid strips, and I used to like some of those things too, but I feel that filling an entire comic with that sort of stuff is a waste of a comic's potential. My favourite comic as a child was Odhams' *Smash!* which featured humour, UK adventure, and Marvel reprint all in one comic.

Growing up, my favourite characters were mainly the unconventional 'outsider' types; The Hulk, Sub-Mariner, Frankie Stein, The Cloak, and mad society-in-danger serials like The Red Wrecker (destructive plants) or The Stinging Swarm (wasps that paralyze people) so I suppose everything percolated into my own creations.

C: *In common with a lot of British talent, you've worked for European publishers too. Tell us a bit about some of that stuff.*

L: The material I did was for Egmont in Scandinavia. Norway and Sweden have quite a healthy comics industry. They also have a lot of newspaper strip reprints so as their readers are accustomed to short gag strips I was asked to contribute something in that format; single tier gag strips that would run four to a page over four pages in a monthly comic.

I created the strip *Suburban Satanists* which was published in Herman Hedning comic from 1997 to 2007. As the title suggests, it's a humour strip about a family who just happen to worship the devil; summoning up Satan to ask him to baby-sit–gags like that. We had the inevitable complaints from Christians, but also from Satanists, complaining that real Satanists didn't actually summon up demons. *Ha!* Nice to know that both sides could be equally humourless. I keep intending to put together a British edition but I never seem to find the time. It's on my 'must do' list for 2010.

C: *What are you working on at the moment? What should we be looking out for?*

L: My most recent strip is *Super School* about a class of super-powered kids which runs in most issues of *The Beano*. It's been going for over a year now and I'm really enjoying it. Scripts are supplied by Iain McLaughlin, Beano's sub-editor, and they're always fun to draw. I've just completed a four page *Super School* for *The Beano* Annual 2011 which will be in the shops from September 2010. I'm dead chuffed to finally be in *The Beano*, and its Annual.

My other regular work includes *Team Toxic*–two pages in every *Toxic*, which are complete comedy-action stories. Loads of daft characters in that, including villains like Butt-Face, Sick Squid, and Hallie Tosis. The 'gross humour' might not be to everyone's taste but I try to make it surreal rather than repulsive.

POSSIBLY LEW'S GREATEST CREATION: THE AWESOME 'BRICKMAN'

BRICKMAN
1/6d
YOU'RE 2 LATE 2 STOP ME BRICKMAN! NOW YOU'LL BE 2-MINUTED BY THE 2 GUNS OF 2-FACE!
WAIT WHATEVER
HANG ON A MINUTE I'VE LOST A CONTACT LENS
Featuring "NOCTURNAL NUISANCE OF THE NUMERICAL NUTTER!"
©2006 LEW STRINGER
YOUR NUMBER'S UP, 2-FACE!
DUFF!
GNKK!
I'M TROWEL, NEW HERD IN TOWN!
BY SHEER COINCIDENCE I'VE JUST DECIDED I OUGHT TO TEAM UP WITH A CRIME FIGHTING PARTNER AND YOU SEEM TO HAVE THE RIGHT INTELLIGENCE AND ATTITUDE FOR THE JOB"
GREAT NOW SAY THAT AGAIN TO MY FACE
THUS WAS BORN THE LEGENDARY PARTNERSHIP OF BRICKMAN AND TROWEL, THE DYSFUNCTIONAL DUO OF GUFFON CITY...
A CHICK WITH A BRICK! IT'S A DREAM COME TRUE!
...AND IN THEIR OTHER IDENTITIES AS ZILLIONAIRE LOOSE BRAYNE AND "MODEL" TINA TROWEL THE COUPLE BECAME THE TOAST OF THE CITY'S SOCIAL CIRCUIT.
HEY TINA! DONTCHA WANNA KNOW US NOW YER HOOKED UP WIT A #@%&$ ZILLIONAIRE?
HO-HO! IT ALWAYS AMUSES ME HOW THOSE PEOPLE PRETEND TO KNOW YOU NOW YOU'RE FAMOUS, TINA!
BRICKMAN? COMMISSIONER MORON HERE! THAT VILE VILLAIN THE POKER IS HOLDING HOSTAGES AT THE CITY BANK! GO GET 'IM BOY!
ER, SORRY COMMISSIONER I PROMISED TINA WE'D GO SHOPPING THIS AFTERNOON!
COME ON WILLYA? THE JEWELRY STORE CLOSES IN HALF AN HOUR!
— AND BRING YER GOLD CARD
IT'LL END IN TEARS
Next: DEATHTRAP!

I also contribute to most issues of *Viz*, usually a page of either 'Suicidal Syd', 'Pathetic Sharks', or 'Felix and His Amazing Underpants'. They're a good bunch of people to work for and doing that sort of topical satirical humour hearkens back to the early days of comics such as Ally Sloper's *Half Holiday*.

I've just heard that *Brickman* is being wrapped up. His final appearance in *Elephantmen* should be out around the time this sees print, although considering Image Comics' erratic publishing schedule and their low page rate it's a blessing in disguise really.

C: *What are you reading at the moment?*

L: It's a bit of a busman's holiday but I enjoy reading books on the history of comics such as *Men of Tomorrow* by Gerard Jones and *The Ten Cent Plague* by David Hajdu. I also like collections of strips such as the *Modesty Blaise* books and the *Marvel Masterworks Atlas Era* (reprinting pre-code horror). And I keep up with what my peers are doing in the pages of *Dandy Xtreme*, *2000AD*, *Marvel Heroes*, and

other current British comics.

C: *What do you think the future holds for British comics, and what is needed to secure that future in your opinion?*

L: Seems to me that one reason the old British comics died out is because they didn't move with the times. There was very little difference in the tone or look of the IPC/Fleetway humour comics from *Whizzer & Chips* No.1 in 1969 to the final Buster in 1999. And there should have been considerable differences in comics that were 30 years apart because they're supposed to be reflecting the styles and attitudes of different generations, just as any other media does. When I was writing *Sonic the Comic* we found that the readers really liked the character development and depth to the continuity, and we still found room to add humour. I'm sure that approach would work in a non-licensed comic too and might make them more loyal to a comic than simple slapstick does these days. Unfortunately retail giants have quite a hold over publishers and it's practically impossible to get a non-licensed comic in their stores. But why are publishers targeting supermarkets anyway? Why not sell comics in the shops kids enjoy going in, such as game stores or toy shops? Or buy some disused ice cream vans and sell comics that way? Anything's got to be better than the current situation where comics are crammed into untidy displays in supermarkets, often placed back-to-front because the shelf-filler couldn't care less. And those shops charge a premium for shelf-space! The DFC had modern looking content and had the right idea in bypassing retail giants for those very reasons, but their subscription model didn't attract enough people.

I'm sure some bright spark will come up with a new idea that'll work soon, but all periodicals are on a sales decline. Graphic novels and Manga seem to be selling well, so perhaps that's the way other publishers will go; producing chunky format books rather than monthly comics, in the same way that paperbacks replaced the monthly pulps? Failing that, have comic strips beamed directly into a microchip in our brains. It'll happen.

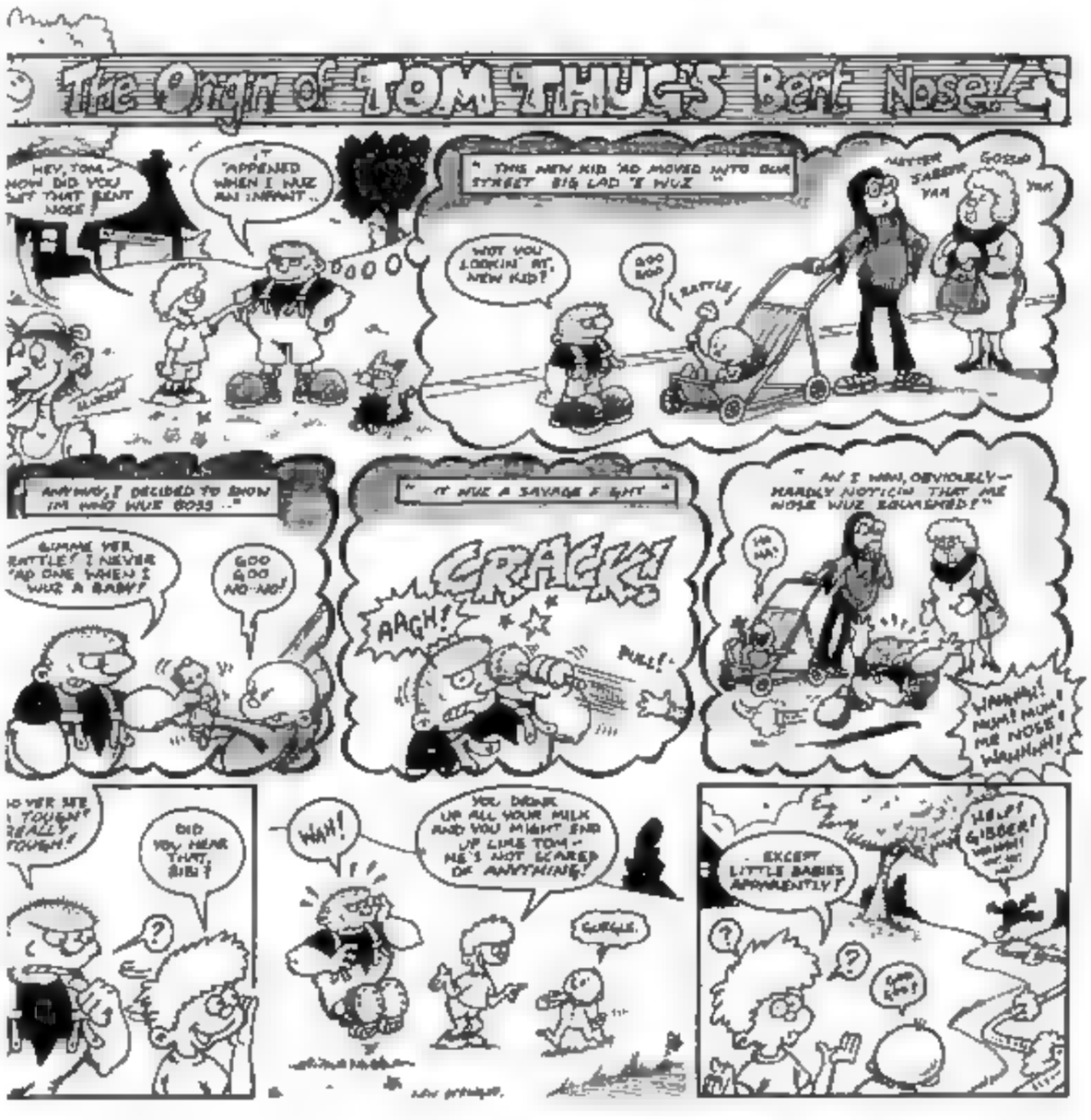
C: *Finally, the question serious academics have long pondered: Brickman or Combat Colin, who would win in a fight?*

L: Neither. They'd both be too busy running scared from The Giggly Sisters. ●

OINK, THE COMIC THAT HAD MARY LIGHTHOUSE SQUEALING

TOM THUG LENT HIS UNIQUE BRAND OF CHARM TO THE PAGES OF OINK!

TOM THUG
(WHAT A MUG!)
GHENGHIS THUG
NAPOLEON THUG
ADOLPH THUG
WE'VE GOT A TRADITION OF AGGRO IN OUR FAMILY SON
NOW IT'S TIME FOR ME TO HANG UP ME BOVVER BOOTS AND BECOME RESPECTABLE
JOB APPLICATION FORM
IT'S UP TO YOU TO CARRY ON THE GREAT FAMILY TRADITION
PRIDE!
TA-DA-DAAA!
I'VE INHERITED ME DAD'S DOC MAYHEM BOOTS! YOU'RE IN FOR TROUBLE SOON
YOU'RE IN FOR BOVVER SOON
GET READY FOR AGGRO SOON
WHAT'S THE MATTER WIV GAVIN 'EM BOVVER NOW? YOU'VE GOT THE BOOTS!
YEH BUT I AIN'T LEARNED 'OW TO TIE THE LACES YET


The Origin of TOM THUG'S Bent Nose!
HEY, TOM! HOW DID YOU GET THAT BENT NOSE?
"APPENED WHEN I WUZ AN INFANT..
"THIS NEW KID 'AS MOVED INTO OUR STREET BIG LAD 'E WUZ"
NEVER SAVE YOU
GOSSIP
WOT YOU LOOKIN' AT, NEW KID?
GOO GOO
BATTLE!
ANYWAY, I DECIDED TO SHOW 'IM WHO WUZ BOSS..."
GIMME YER BATTLE! I NEVER 'AD ONE WHEN I WUZ A BABY!
GOO GOO NO-NO!
"IT WUZ A SAVAGE FIGHT"
CRACK!
AAGH!
PULL!
"AN I WAS, OBVIOUSLY— HARDLY NOTICIN' THAT ME NOSE WUZ BROKENED!"
WAHHH! MUM! MUM! ME NOSE! WAHHH!
OVER ME TOUGH! REALLY TOUGH!
DID YOU HEAR THAT, BIBI?
WAH!
YOU DRINK UP ALL YOUR MILK AND YOU MIGHT END UP LIKE TOM— 'E'S NOT SCARED OF ANYTHING!
GURGLE.
EXCEPT LITTLE BABIES APPARENTLY!
HELP! GIBBER! WAHHH!

THE NEXT GENERATION

BY TONY INGRAM

Say the words 'The Eagle' to anyone of a certain age and it will conjure up images of a bright, glossy, beautifully rendered comic of impressive dimensions, with a distinctive red and gold logo , on a cover in all likelihood dominated by the square jawed figure of that immortal space hero, Dan Dare. Indeed, the original Eagle, a cornerstone of British comics created by the Reverend Marcus Morris and illustrator Frank Hampson in April 1950 as an alternative to what Morris saw as morally dubious American imports, is one of the most famous comics in the world; during its 20 year run, ending in 1969 after 991 issues, it was not only a hit in Britain but reprinted in various languages all over Europe! But say those same words to a child of the 1980s and you'll conjure up an image of a very different Eagle-though one which still deserves its own unique place in comics history. Because on 27 March 1982, Eagle returned to Britain's newsagents to thrill a new generation of readers. Fittingly, as with the original title, that 1982 re-launch gave the world of comics something new and different, along with its cover mounted free plastic 'Space Spinner'. And this time, it was Photographs!

Photo stories were not a new thing in comics in the early 80s of course; even 2000AD had done it more than once, serving up occasional adventures of alien editor Tharg the Mighty as played by some bloke in a boiler suit and a customised rubber mask, in its annuals and 'Sci-Fi Specials'. No comic, though, had attempted to use photo stories to the extent that group editor Barrie Tomlinson's revived Eagle did when the title first resurfaced, nor had most such stories used 'special effects' to the same degree. That first issue contained no less than three full photo stories and one rather odd hybrid of photo and traditional illustration, alongside just two regular comic strips. It's fair to say, I think, that Eagle as published by IPC in 1982 was as unlike anything else on the newsagents shelves as Hulton Press's original eagle had been in 1950. Of course, there had to be some link between the two incarnations, something of the old Eagle carried through to the new, even if changing times and expectations meant that the whole tone of the 80s Eagle was very different from Reverend Morris's original concept of a 'Christian' comic. The link, predictably, was provided by Dan Dare.

Dan, of course, had been seen elsewhere since the original Eagle folded. Eagle and Dan Dare annuals had continued to appear, and his adventures had been reprinted in the pages of 'Lion'.

BELOW: THE TOWER KING AS RENDERED BY JOSE ORTIZ.
BOTTOM: THE MEKON DISCOVERS A MYSTERY IN EAGLE #1
(ART BY GERRY EMBLETON)

Furthermore, in 1977 an updated version of Dare had been the original star of 2000AD, though the character-retooled for an action obsessed 70s audience-bore scant resemblance to the character Morris and Hampson had originally intended to be a Chaplain in the Space Corps. Revived from a century in hibernation in a future far different from Hampson's optimistic vision, Dan was given plastic surgery that made him unrecognizable and swapped his space suit for a donkey jacket and, later, a superhero style jumpsuit complete with alien super weapon in the shape of Eternicus, the Cosmic Claw, a semi-sentient glove! Though he hung on until 1980, this revamped Dare, given to uttering futuristic oaths in moments of stress, failed to win the kind of following he'd previously enjoyed, or which new characters like Judge Dredd were attracting, and his ongoing adventures were cancelled midway through 'Dan Dare, Servant of Evil'. Drokk it!

The New Eagle's Dan wasn't really the original either, though the tone was closer to it than 2000Ads hard-bitten Clint Eastwood look-alike had been. In fact, the first episode of the initial storyline 'Return of the Mekon', which ran for a staggering year and a half, features Dare in only one panel- a flashback to the Mekon's capture decades before, which ended with the dome headed menace freed from suspended animation by a bunch of hapless aliens, tracking his old foe to Earth only to find him buried in Highgate Cemetary under a headstone which states that he died in 1950, long before his battles with the Treen Empire. This seeming impossibility led eventually to 'The Dare Report', a story which told how Dan had originally been a test pilot from the 40s transported into the future in the manner of Buck Rogers. This utterly blatant contradiction of Dare's established history was intended to tie the strip into a proposed TV series which sadly never materialised. Or perhaps happily, depending on your point of view...

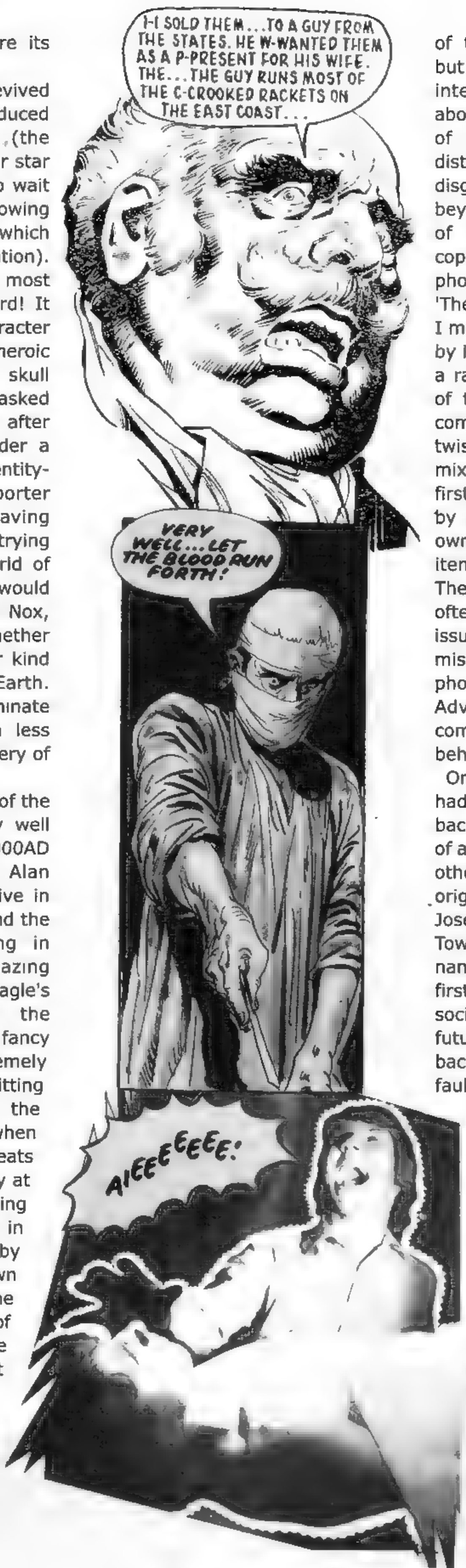
When we do meet the 'new' Dan Dare, it's actually one Daniel Dare, great grandson of the original, battling the Mekon's newest attempt at world domination alongside his faithful friend Sugar Joe and robot maniac JJ. As drawn by Gerry-Embleton though, Dan does bear a strong resemblance to his famous forebear. Barrie Tomlinson wrote those initial episodes, though many other talented creators would have >

a hand in the epic saga before its conclusion.

The other real star of the revived Eagle was a new character introduced in the opening photo story (the Mekon may have been the cover star of the first issue, but he had to wait until the centrespread before showing his face. Still, he was in colour, which must have been some consolation). His name was Servitor Zyn, but most people just called him Doomlord! It would be hard to find a character more far removed from the heroic ideals of the original Eagle; a skull faced alien in the rubber masked tradition of Tharg, his first act after arriving on Earth was to murder a policeman and take on his identity- much to the horror of reporter Howard Harvey who, having witnessed the crime, was left trying to convince an unbelieving world of the threat in our midst. As we would later learn, Zyn, a Servitor of Nox, was sent to Earth to learn whether humanity was a threat to their kind and if so, to destroy the Earth. Ultimately, Zyn decides to eliminate humanity in order to allow a less aggressive species to gain mastery of the planet...

Doomlord is probably the best of the photo stories. It is engagingly well written (unsurprisingly, since 2000AD stalwarts John Wagner and Alan Grant were behind it), innovative in its mix of photos and effects, and the alien himself is quite chilling in appearance–quite an amazing accomplishment, given that Eagle's editor, Dave Hunt, bought the components of his outfit from a fancy dress shop! It is also extremely violent, with the alien committing indiscriminate slaughter from the moment of his arrival. Even when the hapless Howard finally defeats him three months later, it is only at the cost of his own life, exposing himself to a lethal bacterium in order to kill the alien which has by now infected him with its own consciousness. Of course, the kids loved Doomlord. And so of course, Zyn's death could not be allowed to mean the permanent end of the strip.

The slot for the then more or less obligatory sports story was filled by another photo strip, 'Thunderbolt & Smokey', concerning the misadventures


I-I SOLD THEM...TO A GUY FROM THE STATES. HE W-WANTED THEM AS A P-PRESENT FOR HIS WIFE. THE...THE GUY RUNS MOST OF THE C-CROOKED RACKETS ON THE EAST COAST...
VERY WELL...LET THE BLOOD RUN FORTH!
AIEEEEEEEE!

of two young would-be footballers, but better remembered (though less interesting) was 'Sgt Streetwise', about the rather clichéd adventures of undercover cop Sgt Wise, a distressingly stereotypical master of disguise who appeared to have no life beyond his job and to be a graduate of the Jack Regan school of coppering. Finally, as far as the photo strips ere concerned, we had 'The Collector', that rather odd hybrid I mentioned: 'The Collector', depicted by Pat Wright and artist Ron Smith as a rather creepy old man reminiscent of the hosts of a dozen old horror comics, introduced photo strips with a twist to them, sometimes involving a mix of photo and illustration, as in the first issue's tale of an angler captured by aliens on a fishing trip of their own. Each story was based around an item in the old man's collection. These Twilight Zone style shorts are often the high point of the early issues, though they're a bit hit and miss. With the second issue, another photo strip joined the lineup: The Adventures of Fred, a one page comedy short featuring Dave Hunt behind a joke shop nose and glasses.

On the comic strip front, Dan Dare had had the centrespread and the back page, of course, but something of an unappreciated gem was the only other fully illustrated strip in the original line-up-'The Tower King', by Jose Ortiz and Alan Hebden. The Tower King, in reality the improbably named Mick Tempest, appeared in the first 24 issues in a tense saga about a society fighting to survive in a near future world which had been thrown back into a state of feudalism by a faulty satellite making it impossible for any electrical item to work. No TV, no phones, no computer games-oh, the horror! Not that it fazed Mad Max clone Mick who, holed up in his fortress in the Tower of London with his followers, took every challenge as it came, whether it be marauders in steam trains, mutants in the Underground, lunatics who had turned surgery into a religion or Wreckers trying to hose him down with Sulphuric acid! Blessed with excellent scripts and art, the Tower King's adventures continued until Hebden, presumably running out of ideas had a stray meteor hit

the satellite and cause the power to come back on...

With the strips complimented by the usual mix of features including personality profiles on such celebrities as then current Doctor Who Peter Davison and pop star Claire Grogan, a regular column by DJ Mike Read and a surprisingly intelligent letters page (the first issue featured amongst other things Stephen of Canvey Island bemoaning the treatment of cyclists by motorists and Paul of London objecting to adults attempting to curb his right to free speech by telling him off for swearing on the bus-you wouldn't get that in The Beano!) the title began to build itself an audience in the all important first six months (IPC titles which failed to do this tended to be dropped around the 24 week mark). From issue #3, we had the opportunity to collect a miniature version of the first issue of the original Eagle, two pages at a time. Other draws included a free giant-poster of the Mekon in the 8th May issue (the issue numbers were dropped after #3) and the merciful departure of the tedious Sgt Wise after the 5th June issue, his place taken by the rather more engaging comedy-drama adventures of luckless, craggy faced enquiry agent 'Joe Soap', a photo strip by Alan Grant with more than a touch of eighties TV favourite 'Minder' about it. 'Saddle Tramp', a photo strip about a bounty hunter in the 1870s, arrived on 26th June '82, but readers were more excited by the last page announcement in the 7th August issue; Doomlord was coming back! After a mere seven weeks absence, Eagle's most popular new star returned to temporarily oust The Collector from his slot, with Servitor Vek sent to Earth to discover the fate of Zyn in 'Doomlord II'. The strip's popularity, though, necessitated a slight change of direction: clearly, we couldn't have kids cheering the villain, so Vek gained a bit of a soft spot for humans which his predecessor had never displayed and set out to bring Earth into line in hopes of his masters on Nox granting the planet a stay of execution. Despite his newfound affinity for the species though, it was still mankind in general Doomlord was in favour of, not any particular individual, and he had no hesitation in making sacrifices for the greater good. In other words, he was murderous as Zyn had ever been, he just rationalized it better.

On the 4th September, another longtime recurring regular joined the Eagle cast in the shape of the robotic secret agent named 'Manix'. The emotionless assassin, originally portrayed in the photo strip by actor Steve Long, may have been a late addition but the android hitman-whose first job was to kill his creator-would have a long association with Eagle, though his face would change several times before he became a traditional illustrated strip. His enduring popularity is perhaps surprising given his total lack of a personality, but the stories were often highly imaginative. >

PREVIOUS PAGE: SCENES FROM DEATH WISH (TOP), THE TOWER KING (CENTRE) AND PHOTO STRIP THE COLLECTOR.
BELOW: MORE ORTIZ ART FROM THE HOUSE OF DAEMON

Six month's into the title's run, another highly regarded story came along in the shape of 'The House of Daemon' by Grant, Wagner and Ortiz, a wonderfully chilling tale about a couple moving into their newly built dream home only to find it apparently haunted by a cackling, wizened, long haired ghoul (no, they hadn't accidentally wandered into Stringfellow's)! The following week, Saddle Tramp tramped off into the sunset (unfortunately to be replaced by Sgt Streetwise) and the week after that Thunderbolt & Smokey scored their last goal, to be replaced by new photo strip 'The Invisible Boy', a rather silly tale about Tim Talbot, who is turned invisible by his scientist father's 'photon force bombarder', which the old fool has stupidly left lying around the house. The departure of the Tramp and the footballing kids marked a slight change in direction for the comic, which from now on carried a larger proportion of SF and horror strips than anything else. Evidently, IPC had realised that the traditional sport and western stories were now becoming a little dated in the eyes of their core audience.

October '82 saw the publication of the first new Eagle annual, while the weekly continued to go from strength to strength with a by now pretty much established rotating cast. Doomlord continued to try to 'save' humanity by cutting a bloody swathe through great chunks of it (in between missions he would relax at his home base, Mrs. Souster' boarding house; amusingly, due to a simple hypnotic suggestion, Mrs. Souster saw the skull faced alien as traveling salesman Eric Plumrose), the Invisible Boy's adventures continued (invisibility being a trick cheap to realise in a photo strip) and Pat Mills and Ian Kennedy rewrote the original Dan Dare's history in 'The Dare Report', the final part of which consisted of frames from the original Eagle (appropriately, original artist Frank Hampson was credited again). A new addition was photo strip 'Jake's Platoon', concerning a private who finds himself in charge of a depleted infantry unit in Normandy in 1944 after the death of their commanding officer. It was definitely one of the better photo strips, though budgetary restrictions meant that war torn Normandy was clearly actually modern day Kent. In the 12th February '83 issue, the Aldritches battled Servitor Zom to save finally escaped the House of Daemon (the 'ghost' having been unexpectedly revealed to be an evil mutant child from the 26th Century) but bigger changes were about to assault the readership's senses in the following issue with the coming of...3D!

For the benefit of those thankfully too young to remember the mercifully brief craze for 3D comic strips, these were usually perfectly adequately drawn strips made totally unreadable by being offset in red and green and accompanied by a pair of cardboard glasses with one red and one green plastic lens, intended to fool the eye into thinking the image shown was three dimensional. For a sizable chunk of the readership of these strips-inexplicably popular at various times between the fifties and the eighties-it never actually worked, meaning their enjoyment of the actual story was ruined as they couldn't see what was happening. Eagle's own 'Gil Hazzard, Codename Scorpio' was no exception and neither were the mag's other 3D features. Fortunately new stories 'Doomlord III' (in which Servitor Vek revealed himself to the people of Earth and

humanity, though still managing to murder a few of them along the way), 'The Fifth Horseman' and 'Crowe Street Comp' (think of TV's Grange Hill) more than made up for this eye watering drivel. Hebden and Ortiz's 'Fifth Horseman' is a particular highlight of this period.

Eagle's flirtation with 3D lasted just three weeks and by the comic's first birthday issue normal service had been resumed, though it didn't make Codename Scorpio look much better. In the next few weeks the photo strips continued to make excellent use of their limited resources as two new stories debuted-'House of Correction' (a wartime thriller set in the shadowy world of the French Resistance and not, as the name might seem to imply, a low budget soft porn flick set in a women's prison) and 'Walk or Die', about a group of kids lost in the Canadian wilderness after a plane crash. Both were imaginative and well received, but changes were in the wind for Eagle.

July saw the debut of 'The Hand', a chiller about a photographer who finds himself acting strangely after a transplant gives him the hand of a dead contract killer, as well as the unexpected reappearance of 'One Eyed Jack', a well known 70s strip about a hard boiled American cop, Jack McBane, which had previously appeared in the pages of Valiant from 1975. The fact that this strip was a reprint was obvious even to those unfamiliar with it; though excellent, it was indisputably rather dated and conspicuously without creator credits. McBane's appearance marked the beginning of a new, cost cutting trend for the title. Observant readers also noted that the photo stories were becoming fewer by this time (Manix's ludicrous battle against 'the Uglies', represented by men in joke shop masks, was one of the last and certainly the worst) and with the 24th September '83 issue Eagle underwent a format change, shifting to a larger size (bringing it into line with the rest of IPC's titles) on cheaper paper and dispensing with the still popular but expensive photo strips altogether. A worthwhile experiment which had helped build Eagle a solid fan base, it nonetheless just wasn't economical to continue with the strips. A great shame, I think, since those first 78 issues were unlike anything else ever seen on Britain's newsagent's shelves.

TO BE CONTINUED...

BELOW: MORE FROM THE TOWER KING.
RIGHT: MANIX, THE MEKON, AND THE MINDER (PIN-UP)

THEM TANKS AVE GOT DIESEL ENGINES SON DIESELS DON'T NEED AN ELECTRIC SPARK TO FIRE THE CYLINDERS THEY WORK BY COMPRESSION AND CAN BE STARTED BY CRANKING INSTEAD OF BATTERIES!
THAT MEANS THE WRECKERS MUST CONTROL SOME STOCKS OF DIESEL FUEL WITHOUT WHICH THE TANKS WOULD BE USELESS
AT THAT MOMENT OUTSIDE THE BANK
QUIET I THINK I HEAR VOICES FROM INSIDE
I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHERE THEY'VE GOT THE DIESEL FUEL!
IT'S THE TOWER KING. TEMPEST! LET'S GET HIM
I NEED PRISONERS FOR INTERROGATION
YOU WON'T BE TAKING ANY PRISONERS TOWER KING
IT WAS ONE OF THE TRAMP'S CATS WHICH WRECKED THE WRECKERS SCHEME
GOING TO FINISH YOU TOWER KING!
UUURRGH!
WHAT THE..
UUURRF!
EAT A GOLD BAR GLITTER SCUM!

AND, WHILE I'M AT IT...

DENNIS WITHOUT GNASHER

A new, regular column from Stephen Hooker– the second person to take a copy of Crikey! *on holiday!*

As a child, I loathed *Hector's House*. Really, really loathed it. Although, maybe, loathed is too weak a word. Should that be hated or, possibly, despised? And it was not because the strings on the anthropomorphised puppets were visible. An uncle, the one lacking the fundamental grounding of an imagination, had already been quick to point out that the people in Thunderbirds were not real. His unshakeable face, imparting such stupefying adult knowledge, shook when I replied: I know.

However, in that lost time slot, when children's television programmes ran out of condesending presenters and the grown-up news was assembled by hand, there existed a five-minute programming gap that needed to be filled. And the BBC, much like nature, abhorred a vacuum. Although, puzzlingly enough, that does not explain the extstance of *Strictly Come Dancing*.

Hence the need to fill that time-slot and the appearance of Eric Thomson's sublime, Anglised, *Magic Roundabout*, the moving of brightly coloured cardboard figures against a brightly coloured cardboard background that was the honorable *Captain Pugwash*, the wobbely animation of *Roobarb and Custard*, voiced by Richard Briers (between stints of provoking jealous outbursts from me, while he played Felicity Kendal's husband...the b*stard!) and the unmistakable, dragon powered, welcome in the green hills, of *Ivor The Engine*. Acceptable viewing.

Except when the aforementioned *Hector's House* that also filled that five minute gap more often than was really necessary. Hector was a dog and his wife was a cat and you know and I know that cats and dogs do not get on, let alone live together. It was against the very laws of nature. I imagined that David Attenborough had a to say on the subject and eagerly awaited his documentary on the sheer wrongness of *Hector's House*. Worse still, the Hector's neighbour was an interfering female frog with, for some reason that was beyond my childhood years, a French accent.

Ooh–flipping– la la!

And the punch line to all the escapades Hector found himself in, usually way out of his mind-numbing depth, was: I've been a silly old Hector. Damn right you have, now get off my Rediffusion television set and bring me the head of children's programming, would be my mental scream on having to endure episodes of it. Nobody turned the TV over, my mum thought Hector's House was just what I wanted to watch. Or, given there were only three channels to choose from back then, selecting another was not the option it is today.

I have further proof of *Hector's House's* undocumented, underling subliminal wrongness' too. When Bill Murray was brought before the mayor in *Ghostbusters* (1984), he was quick to point out that one of the hallmarks of the end of the world, was the chilling 'cats and dogs, living together...' Bill was obviously referring to *Hector's House*. Ladies and genglemen, we are through the looking glass here, people!

Not all pairings, of characters are right. Not even on the spiritual plane let alone the BBC. Or the printed comic book page.

Which brings me to *The Beano*'s *Dennis The Menace*, who, for me anyway, ruled the *Beano* until one fateful day in 1968. A black armband day if there ever was one. I'll come back to it in a moment or two with some suitablely sombre music as well.

Dennis was my kind of radical, my kind of spur in the face of the ruling adult society. Whilst the *Dandy*'s *Bully Beef and Chips* had its moments, Dennis was taking on the world around him and winning. He even outthought the chastisement his father dished out with a handy hardback book neatly placed where the sun don't shine. A veritable rebel with a cause.

Dennis was my childhood role-model.

And I was happily enjoying his weekly adventures right up until that faithful day in 1968 when everything changed. It arrived by stealth, black and wooly and claiming to be lost and of Abyssinian wire-haired tripehound stock. Dennis took pity on the mutt and Gnasher joined the strip from that moment on. Cue the *Marche funèbre, Trauermarsch* please.

Then, slowly but surely Dennis began to loose his menace. Not overnight, just slowly, character death by a thousand pets. Even arch enemy Walter got a poodle called Foo-Foo in 1970. Gnasher had a son called Gnipper and a number of daughters with annoying names like Gnatasha and Gnorah. Then there was Rasher, a pig, of course making the bacon for Dennis in 1979. Dennis even got a fish in 2006 named, wait for it...Splasher!

So, for me anyway, the Menace in Dennis died an unnatural death, less menace and more pets corner.

And don't get me wrong; if, after you've read this, you think that Steve doesn't like pets you will be wrong because I do. I like cows, pigs, chickens, fish in batter, ducks and goats.

But Dennis, if I might address you directly, you never aspired to becoming a vet and you seemed to go from maverick, adult defying menace to a supporting character in a menagerie.

I'm not adverse to animal pairings with humans either. Take Harlen Ellison's buddy buddy story 'A Boy And His Dog'.

Now that was man's best friend. ●

NUTTY NOTIONS

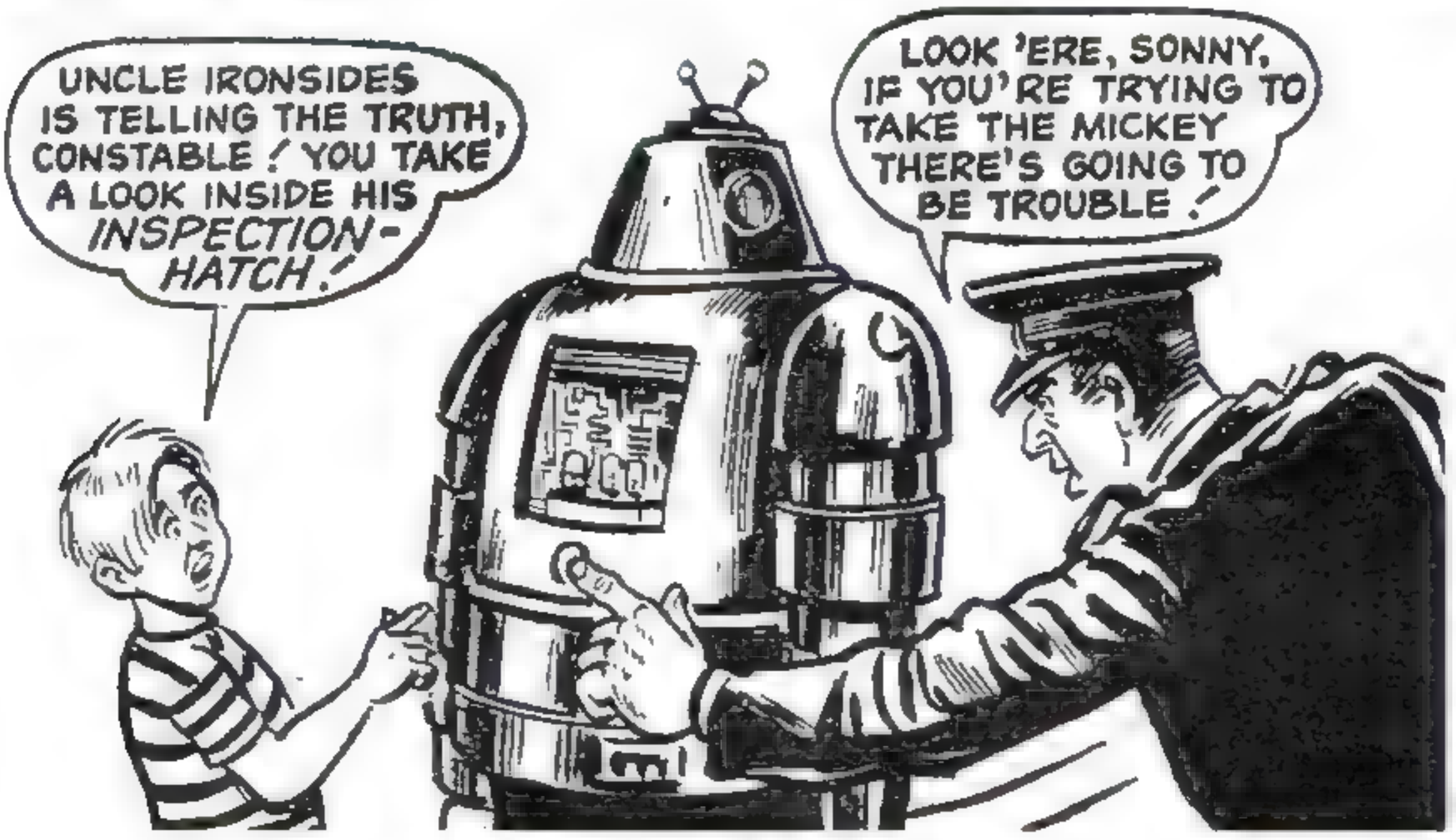
Each issue of *Crikey!* features a selection of some of the lovingly bizarre concepts that have graced the pages of British comics in years past. Once again *Tony Ingram* proves that he has read way too many comics in his time... *Ideas and nominations for future Nutty Notions gratefully accepted through the* Crikey! *website (www.crikeyuk.co.uk), click 'contact' and away you go! Enjoy!*

MARNEY THE FOX (BUSTER, 1975-76) ART BY JOHN STOKES

One of the more unusual strips to appear in Buster, Marney the fox basically did exactly what it said on the tin: Marney was a fox cub, albeit an unusually erudite one. He stalked the fields of rural England, discoursing eloquently (albeit only in his own head; c'mon, foxes can't talk!) on the evils of 'hated man' who 'hunts only to kill', and showed a remarkable level of understanding of man's activities and a surprising (not to say improbable) degree of sympathy for other victims of man's perfidy; the observation that 'tis Yelloweye the dog otter. He too has suffered from the actions of hated man' leads to Marney imaging just how the otter met his sudden demise as a consequence of man dynamiting a pool of fish, at which Marney sorrowfully thinks 'instant oblivion for Yelloweye the proud! He breathes no more!' Oddly enough, though, he does not then immediately attempt to eat the newly dead Yelloweye! Obviously, the victims of hated man have to maintain solidarity! On another occasion, poor Marney is blinded by pesticides in an orchard. Serves him right, I say: if the sanctimonious little sod's that clever, he should have read the 'keep out' signs. Luckily for Marney, he was rescued and his sight restored with healing waters by a lovely vixen who led him off to live happily together in a lonely vale 'far from the curse of hated man'. Ah, a happy ending for once...

SAMMY BREWSTER'S SKI-BOARD SQUAD (BUSTER, 1975-76) ART BY JOE COLQUHOUN

'Unknown to police sergeant Daniel Brewster, his son Sammy had formed a secret Ski-Board Squad to help people in the Lake District area where they lived.' A laudable endeavour, but Sammy, Sheila, Angus and Billy's activities can't have been all that secret since, upon being rescued from a watery grave by them after his hot air balloon is shot down, one old chap's immediate response is 'by jiminy, first I gets shot at, then I gets to meet the secret ski-board squad!' Actually, I'd imagine the sight of a quartet of masked kids haring towards you across the water on boards trailing plumes of smoke would be enough to put the wind up most people these days-it's a wonder PC Dan didn't end up arresting his altruistic offspring on suspicion of attempted armed robbery or something. Fortunately, he was probably too busy dealing with the somewhat unlikely number of actual crimes which routinely plagued his particular region of the lakes, everything from daring thieves on stunt bikes to spies passing on nuclear secrets via the aforementioned hot air balloon! Personally, I'd have asked for a quieter posting. Like Beirut.


UNCLE IRONSIDES IS TELLING THE TRUTH, CONSTABLE! YOU TAKE A LOOK INSIDE HIS INSPECTION-HATCH!
LOOK 'ERE, SONNY, IF YOU'RE TRYING TO TAKE THE MICKEY THERE'S GOING TO BE TROUBLE!

UNCLE IRONSIDES (BUSTER & COR!, 1974)

Uncle Ironsides was an 'amazing robot' (OK, actually a rather daft looking robot) who'd 'come to live with the Carter family as an experiment'. Ironsides was very proud of his pedigree as a 'genuine, computerized instant feedback XJ7 MK IV', but his computerized brain didn't stop him from invariably causing chaos everywhere he went with his well meaning attempts to be 'helpful'. Uncle Ironsides was effectively IPC's answer to the Dandy's 'Brassneck', though drawn in a rather more realistic manner. His adventures, however, were generally beyond belief! ●

Everyone has heard of Marvel Comics. *And everyone knows they're as immediately identifiable with America as* McDonalds, Coca Cola *or truly rubbish TV sit-coms. But from 1972 to the early 1990's, there was another* Marvel Comics, *and this one was decidedly British! Tony Ingram continues his overview of one of Britain's best...*

THE RISE AND FALL OF MARVEL UK

PART SIX:

SPIDEY MAKES HIS DEBUT IN ENGLAND (SORT OF)
ART BY MARK FARMER

For over a decade, through numerous title changes, Spider-Man had settled comfortably in as a regular part of the British weekly comic line-up which many bought but few people really thought about that much. But in 1984, Marvel US made an unprecedented move; they changed Spider-Man's instantly recognizable costume! This had caused controversy in America, but in Britain it gave Marvel UK palpitations!

What happened when the stories they were reprinting caught up with the change? Spider-Man wasn't nearly as well established in Britain and the weekly readership was generally younger. Would they accept the change? Marvel couldn't be sure, so they tried every trick in the book to delay printing the new stuff, including commissioning a new, UK originated Spidey strip by Mike Collins, Barry Kitson and Mark Farmer (*Spider-Man* #607-610) which saw the webbed wonder travel to the UK to battle cyborg killer Assassin-8 (they even tied the story into Spidey's guest appearance on kids TV show 'Saturday Starship'). Eventually, of course, they could delay no longer, and the new black costume debuted in #631. As Marvel had feared, it did not go down well.

In #634, three weeks later, they abandoned their longest running strip altogether. Spider-Man reverted to his familiar red and blue suit, now in stories reprinted from the US 'Spidey Super Stories' comic for younger readers. It was a sign of things to come, as the few remaining weeklies gravitated towards the younger audience who were now pretty much the only ones still reading them. With #666 (14th December '85), *Spider-Man* bit the dust. It was relaunched as *Spider-Man & Zoids* (another toy tie-in) from 3rd March '86, but lasted only another 51 issues in this incarnation. February 16th 1987 was the ignoble end of a proud weekly tradition.

January 1985 marked the return of Captain Britain in his own monthly magazine, the good Captain's adventures now chronicled by Jamie Delano and Alan Davis, backed up by reprints of Night Raven from *Hulk Comic* and *Abslom Daak: Dalek Killer* from *DWM*, by a new series starring old *DWM* characters the *Freefall Warriors* by Steve Parkhouse and Jerry Paris, and by a rather odd prose story, *Paragon of Painthorpe St*, by

Steve Alan. A little heavy on the reprints, but a good mix, and if it seemed a bit too interlinked with *DWM*, well, *Doctor Who* and *Marvel UK* were now inextricably linked anyway. Better yet, *Captain Britain* was to be sold not just in Britain but in America, as well! With the *DWM* strips also being reprinted in a US colour comic, Marvel UK was finally making its mark.

Just a bit too late.

Paragon and the *Warriors* bowed out in CB #4, replaced by a forgettable new text story, 'City' by Mike Collins, and by a hilarious new strip, *Space Thieves,* by Dave Harper and Barry Kitson. The peculiar story of a bunch of space going misfits fighting aliens who looked like wild boar seriously deserves reprinting somewhere, though the *Thieves* only appeared until #10, when they were last seen heading back into space to try and undo the almighty cock-up they'd made of their first mission. The same issue also saw the *Night Raven* strip joined by a new text story, one last outing in this form for the bird masked vigilante. Issue #11 contained a huge pull-out poster of Captain Britain, saw off Abslom Daak, and began a new story starring the Cherubim, a group of mutant children from the *Captain Britain* strip, created by Mike Collins and Mark Farmer, while #12 began reprinting the classic *Black Knight* strip. *Night Raven*'s long run as a text story finally ended in #12, too (appropriately, with the immortal phrase "night time in the city"). And #14, which concluded both The Cherubim and the two part text story 'Captain Granbretan', as well as ending *The Black Knight* after a mere three episodes, was the final issue. Captain Britain was last seen curled up by a warm fire with a warm woman and a drink (though he would soon resurface in the American Marvel titles with a whole new lease on life). The Marvel UK line, as we had known it since 1979, was effectively finished.

Except, it wasn't...

Marvel continued to publish weekly titles-mostly aimed at younger readers, though books like *Secret Wars* (27th April '85-10th January '87), *Spider-Man & Zoids*, the short lived *Punisher* (launched August '89) and *X-Men* (a bi-weekly launched in October '94) kept the Marvel superheroes represented. In February 1990, they launched one final experimental title for older readers, 'Strip!', which brought us characters such as *Marshal Law* and >

THE PUNISHER – 'NUFF SAID!

The Man from CANCER, plus British translations of Don Lawrence's European masterpiece, *Storm*. The book lasted 20 issues, ending abruptly, ironically enough, the issue before *Night Raven* was due to return in a new comic strip adventure. From 1988, they also experimented with US format books in a small way, with SF comedy *The Sleeze Brothers* (six issues, August '89-January '90), futuristic fighters *Dragon's Claws* (10 issues, October '88-July '89) and, most significantly, robotic 'freelance peacekeeping agent' (*don't* call him a bounty hunter!) *Death's Head*, a deadpan character with an irritating habit of ending every sentence with an interrogative 'yes?', who debuted in a *Transformers* strip and then guest starred in both the *Doctor Who* strip (!) and *Dragon's Claws* before getting his own ten issue series (March-December '89). In the spirit of fair play, the good Doctor and his TARDIS guest starred in *Death's Head* #8, finally being established as existing in the Marvel Universe at least some of the time. *Death's Head*, too, later appeared in various Marvel US titles, as well as in a memorable serial in *Strip!*, which told his origin. Lastly, though definitely not least, there was *The Knights of Pendragon*, an 18 issue series (July 1990-December '91) printed on eco-friendly 'scangloss' recycled paper, which told an epic tale of former *Captain Britain* supporting character Dai Thomas, superhero *Union Jack* and plucky reporter Kate

McLellan amongst others, taking on a supernatural force called The Bane. Even *Captain Britain* himself made a brief return to Marvel UK for the odd guest appearance (though his regular appearances in the corner box on the cover were somewhat misleading in that respect)! A great series with a worthwhile objective, to champion the 'green' cause.

Sadly, these series' were none of them great successes in terms of sales. Even more sadly, though, the limited success they did have gave Marvel UK...ideas. In April 1992, they launched *Overkill*, a fortnightly title starring a rejigged version of the *Knights of Pendragon* and a slew of new characters (including a new version of *Death's Head* with little of his predecessor's charm). The idea was that the *Overkill* series would reprint stories from a whole new line of books, including *Pendragon II*, *Warheads* and *Motormouth*, which would themselves be created in Britain but sold only in the US. It was a confused idea, and the results a confused mess. *Overkill* lasted 52 issues until August '94, the various US format books rather less. And with them, died Marvel UK. In the mid '90's, the company's assets (including *Doctor Who Magazine*) were bought by Panini UK, who have published various reprint titles under the Marvel UK name ever since; there's even a revived, monthly version of *Mighty World of Marvel*, once again! But it isn't really Marvel UK.

BELOW: KEVIN O'NEILL'S MARSHAL LAW, A REGULAR IN THE PAGES OF STRIP!

Still, those old stories are still out there. Panini are currently reprinting the early *Captain Britain* stories in sequence in a series of collected editions, *Death's Head* has had the same treatment and *Dragon's Claws* are lined up for it as I write this. And of course, the Captain continues to appear in American Marvel titles, too. Even *Night Raven* has reappeared across the pond, albeit infrequently. And so long as these great characters continue to appear somewhere, for a generation who were lucky enough to be there and reading in the 70's and 80's, the sun will never truly set on Marvel UK.

Night time in the city... ●

THE END...

*For future issues of **Crikey!** let us know what you think about our magazine, British comics, your reactions to features or simply make us laugh.*
*Our address is: **Crikey!** 13 Rosethorns Close, Gladewood, Middleton, Manchester. M24 6TP*
Or simply contact us through the website : www.crikeyuk.co.uk

IT'S YOUR LETTERS!

Dear *Crikey!*

Wow! Was issue 13 worth the wait?–for me it certainly was!

To see a new Mike Higgs 'Cloak' adventure, by the man himself–and in colour! Gosh! What a delight, and Mike's description of how he gained a place in 'Pow' with the 'Cloak' was the icing on the cake indeed.

I do so hope *Crikey!* can move forward from Mike as you have carved a little notch in comics history now, with the *Cloak*'s return.

Of course, if even there is a chance of a new 'I.SPY' strip, I for one am ready with suggestions–plotwise.

The *Action* article from Justin was most informative for me. I hardly knew anything about *Action*, only really finding out about it from the third 'Comics Britannia' BBC4 special. Justin's enthusiasm for *Action* came across well in his article. It's not really my kind of comic–but I can empathise with Justin's feelings for the publication.

I really hope *Crikey!* will recover it's market strength...it is up to us readers/fans to tell others what a thrilling publication it is.

Cheers!
Alan Smith
Wolverhampton

Thanks Alan – and, yes, Crikey! *readers out there do have a big say in what happens to this magazine!*

Dear Sirs,

I'd like to say how much I thoroughly enjoyed issue 12, which offered much enjoyment and nostalgia, not just in the world of 'Docter Who', but in British comics in general.

Thank you for your time.
Mr C Sanwell

Short and sweet, Mr S; but welcome all the same!

Hi Glenn

Just received *Crikey!* 13. Many thanks for another interesting and informative issue. Justin Marriott's article 'Pulp Rules Okay!', and the Kevin O'Neill interview were of particular interest to me because, for a time, I worked as an art assistant on both *Action* and *2000AD*.

Thanks again for a great magazine!
Colin Wyatt
Illustrator
email

Thanks Colin–Justin's article(s) have gone down a storm. For those of you interested in Colin's career, rest assured that he will be the subject of a future interview in Crikey!. We're really looking forward to that one!

Dear *Crikey!*

Just picked up the last couple of issues at the Leeds comic mart. Only had time to browse so far, but looking forward to reading the *Doctor Who* article amongst others.

I don't always agree with the opinions of your reviewers, but that's the name of the game, isn't it? I would never think of writing in to object to someone liking a particular strip/comic just because I didn't, but when someone takes a swipe at something (whether I like it or not) I think they have to be prepared to weather some flak. So here goes...

The *Missing Link/Johnny Future* was in no way the failure your 'Nutty Notions' feature (ish #12) made it out to be. Here's my counter argument:

"It was just a Hulk rip-off." I hear this a lot, but seriously, apart from a physical resemblance what was there between the two strips that was similar? The Link was a beast who evolved into a man; the Hulk was the opposite. The Link didn't revert back and forth between his incarnations; the Hulk did. The Link actively chose to become a super-hero when the opportunity presented itself; the Hulk spent all of his time avoiding same. The Hulk genuinely was a menace (as originally conceived; go back and re-read his original series); the Link never was, until Bull Belson turned him into one and even then the Link mostly just wanted to be left alone (he never was the creature 'driven by rage' that the Hulk was; he was just an animal in human form). And lastly, if the Link's origin was a rip-off of anything it was surely King Kong (with a bit of Mighty Joe Young thrown in).

"Link was not a hit with the readers." Do you have insider information? From the only surviving info that I have to hand (the readers' letters pages) the Link was a hugely popular character. His stories, especially post-make-over, were excellent examples of a very British take on the super-powers theme, with the Link getting the short end of the stick from all concerned, culminating in his losing the one person who might have made his life a bit brighter. As far as I can see from later letters, the transformation into Johnny Future was equally as popular.

"...wandered into a nuclear reactor.. and emerged as...Johnny Future." Not even close. The Link was still the Link for many issues after the nuclear reactor incident. He didn't become Johnny Future until a super-villain threatened the UK, then Link became Johnny Future to battle him.

"...demonstrating more or less random super-powers..." Granted, the writers occasionally got muddled over Johnny's exact powers, but read the stories in sequence and they weren't random. Frequently, it is stated that Johnny's powers are expanding and evolving (or, more correctly, that he is learning more and more what the limits–or lack thereof–are to his abilities).

"...Johnny was not a success either and was gone by the end of February 1968." I've already handled the first half of that, so let's deal with the second. The entire comic vanished in February '68 (merging with companion paper Terrific) and Johnny, along with Thor, the X-Men, and Iron Man, had been in every single issue. He even got a bumper-length tale to go out on in the last ish (No.51).

"...returned briefly in the 1969 annual." The only word I object to there is 'briefly'. Johnny's story in the 1969 annual was neither brief nor an example of a series that was unpopular and needed disposing of. Presented for the first time in full colour, it was one of Johnny's most entertaining stories, featuring a graphically hideous villain (Disastro) and a story line that was typically noir, like the best stories of his series

Lastly, and unproveable without speaking to the writer, I'm not convinced that the change from the original Link to the advanced Link was random. Read the whole series from ish No.1 up to his transformation and it comes out at about the length of a single US issue, and moves with a fluidity and inevitability that makes you ask: was this intended as an origin story? I can't prove it, but I will let the evidence speak for itself.

Sorry for the length of this, but as readers of my own fanzine will know, I'm a bit of a fan of the series and while I recognise its failings and occasional lapses into tedium, I don't like to see it criticised unfairly.

Best regards
Paul Ware

PS Loving the history of Marvel UK, by the way.

Well, I'll bow to your evidently expert knowledge of the series, Paul. I can only really go by my own impressions of the series (and those of others I've spoken to about it, of course), and I'll admit, I've a good few issues missing and have never really analyzed Mister Future in depth. But I do remain unconvinced that his transformation from prehistoric beast man to super advanced crime buster was planned from the beginning; it all seemed a bit too much of a departure to me. However, since we're unlikely ever to know the truth about that point, I guess we have to agree to disagree! Thanks for an interesting new take on the strip, though-it's always good to be made to rethink your assumptions. Maybe we've been doing the Link a disservice...

Hi Glenn

Great to see a *Crikey!* sized envelope with your distinctive scrawl on it and know that the mag had survived the demise of Borders. A beam of sun-light in a very gloomy January.

I hope that people continue to support *Crikey!* as I truly believe the small-press world is in danger of being gentrified in the way our High Streets have been. No surprising, quirky, independantly owned shops, just row after row of *Gap*, *Starbucks* and *Tesco Xpress*. With Borders closing, *Diamond* tightening their criteria (i.e. if we can't sell hundreds to the US we're not interested) and *Forbidden Planet* not stocking fanzines, where will new readers discover *Crikey!*?

I'm sure the respective companies business models drive the stocking of *Star Wars* action figures rather than crappy fanzines, but I would have thought that by having a diversity of stock (even stuff that shock, horror, you haven't got a 200% mark up on) you attract additional and more diverse customers. Personally I don't bother to visit *Forbidden Planet* anymore because I know there will be no surprises awaiting me and I can just order the latest *Walking Dead* or *Hellblazer* collection through Amazon at a saving of a few quid. However, if I was down in FP scanning an eclectic magazine rack I would be more likely to pick up a 100 Bullets collection on display for

convenience and it's only a couple of quid more than Amazon.

It strikes me that comic stores will end up competing on price with Amazon etc which surely is a battle they can't win, whereas offering stock that Amazon wouldn't consider would differentiate them. Surely it stands to reason that someone purchasing *Crikey!* is ripe to buy British reprint titles when visiting your store? I think a good birching and national conscription is on order for the rather short-sighted owners of such distribution channels. I would be really interested to understand a bit more about their strategy and business model, but I suspect I'm alone in this!

In terms of issue 13, it reached the normal high standards. The piece by Mike Higgs was my favourite as it covered an area of comics I had absolutely zilch knowledge of, and his quirky, intensely style of art was an absolute joy to behold. 'Four D Jones' was also an excellent addition-although 9 panels per issue is a bit stingey and I think it deserves 2 pages reproducing 8 strips per issue. But bravo for uncovering such obscure gems!

To me the Kev O'Neill interview represents the cross-roads *Crikey!* is at. As a huge O'Neill fan (as an early teen I still remember trying to replicate his obsessively detailed robot soldiers and his *2000AD* cover as film-poster-*Yesterday's Hero* I think-absolutely blew my mind, my equivalent to the famous Basil Wolverton *Mad/Life* cover) it just wasn't in-depth enough, and went over the same anecdotes I'd read again and again. I understand that this might not be the case for everyone and you needed to outline his career, but I would have liked it to have gone down a level in terms of detail.

Now in your previous incarnation as a full-on commercial mag you couldn't get too obscure as it would put off the more casual, impulse buy type-reader. But now you have returned to a smaller print-run with a more specialised audience, do you turn interviews with the likes of Pat Mills and O'Neil into a series with each one exploring in-depth a certain period of their career? There's no doubting that *Crikey!*'s accessibility adds to its appeal but I would welcome some of the pieces getting a bit more train-spotterish.

Crikey! has survived, you're looking good and retained your sparkle. I'm looking forward to seeing how you both take the mag forward in 2010.

Best of luck!

Justin Marriott
email

'Nuff said, Justin!

Dear Glenn and Tony,

I am so pleased that, despite the best efforts of the credit crunch and the recent demise of Borders, Crikey powers on. I have gone from a state of vague awareness of the magazine's existence a year or so ago to being an avid reader, regularly checking in on the website to see what's occurring and greedily buying up back issues to complete my set. Its fascinating to see your journey from tentative beginnings to full-throttle success in recent months, and there is no doubt that Crikey now stands as a vital part of any comic reader/collector's library. Obviously its sad to see full colour slipping back so soon after its initial appearance, but the main thing is you're there, you're publishing, and we the readers are still being given plenty of good things to mull over every couple of months.

Particular highlights in recent issues for me have been: Justin Marriott's twin pieces on '70s pulp/comic crossovers, the David Roach article on Carol Day, and (a little while ago now) the Wicked Wanda and friends pieces. Personally I would be pleased to see Crikey! focus in on fewer but slightly longer articles per issue. I know the danger there is that some readers won't turn up for an issue that has 'nothing for them', but with longer, deeper pieces you can really get to the heart of a topic, rather than having to skate over something in order to fit a smaller page count. As for subject matter-well, the list is endless: for broad surveys how about more on the history of the British newspaper strip (it would look fine and black and white too!), or begging David Roach to write up the impact of Spanish artists on 1960s and 70s romance comics? As for individual artist pieces I'd love to see a really good, wide-ranging interview with Arthur Ranson or John Burns. Profiles of Tony Weare and Gerry Haylock (just not to be found eleswhere) would also be wonderful. I daresay having no colour for some of these would be a little trickier ...but there are always those coveted centre pages.

Anyway I am delighted and relieved that Crikey is still moving forward, and I-like many others-will continue to wait with bated breath publication day. Good luck!

Jim O'Brien
email

Many thanks for that, Jim - without being too obvious it's letters and praise like this that keep us going. The Borders situation hit us hard, but, like the troopers we are, we met it full on and dealt with it in the only positive way we could-by continuing. We've had nothing but good reviews about Justin Marriott's fine piece on the 70's pulp/crossover and I would urge you to seek out Justin's fine magazine 'Paperback Fanatic'. You've obviously seen and read the potential of David Roach and his expertise on artists and writing skills-in fact, and this is sad news for Crikey! but good news for all of you out there, David is currently writing a book about many of our favorite comic artists...but you'll have to look for that elsewhere. No doubt we'll review the book when it's published. We are looking at the British newspaper strip very soon and we had an interview with John Burns' at one point but were then unable to use it for one reason or another. We would love to run longer articles, but as you can realise, it may alienate some people as they may not be their 'favorite'-in fact, we ran close to the edge with the content in Crikey! 10, which has gained some kind of notoriety since it appeared yet remains one of our best selling issues. Hmm. But you needn't be concerned, we have lots of stuff coming up in future issues so just "watch this space" as they say!

That's it for this issue. Keep your letters coming and we'll talk again ... pretty soon!

WHERE IN THE WORLD..?

Dear Glenn,

Many thanks for the *Crikey!* back issues (issues 10 to 13). They are fantastic! I finished issue 13 on the train ride home this evening (and was so absorbed I almost missed my stop!) and am about to start on issue 12. Great cover on issue 12, by the way. I have been an avid reader of *Doctor Who Weekly/Monthly/Magazine* since issue 1 in 1979 and was able to continue to enjoy DWM after I emigrated to Canada in 1980 thanks to the kindness of my grandfather (Geoff Langford) who, for the next 10 years or so, dutifully posted a copy to me each month! Many thanks also to John Freeman's downthetubes blog for bringing *Crikey!* to my attention.

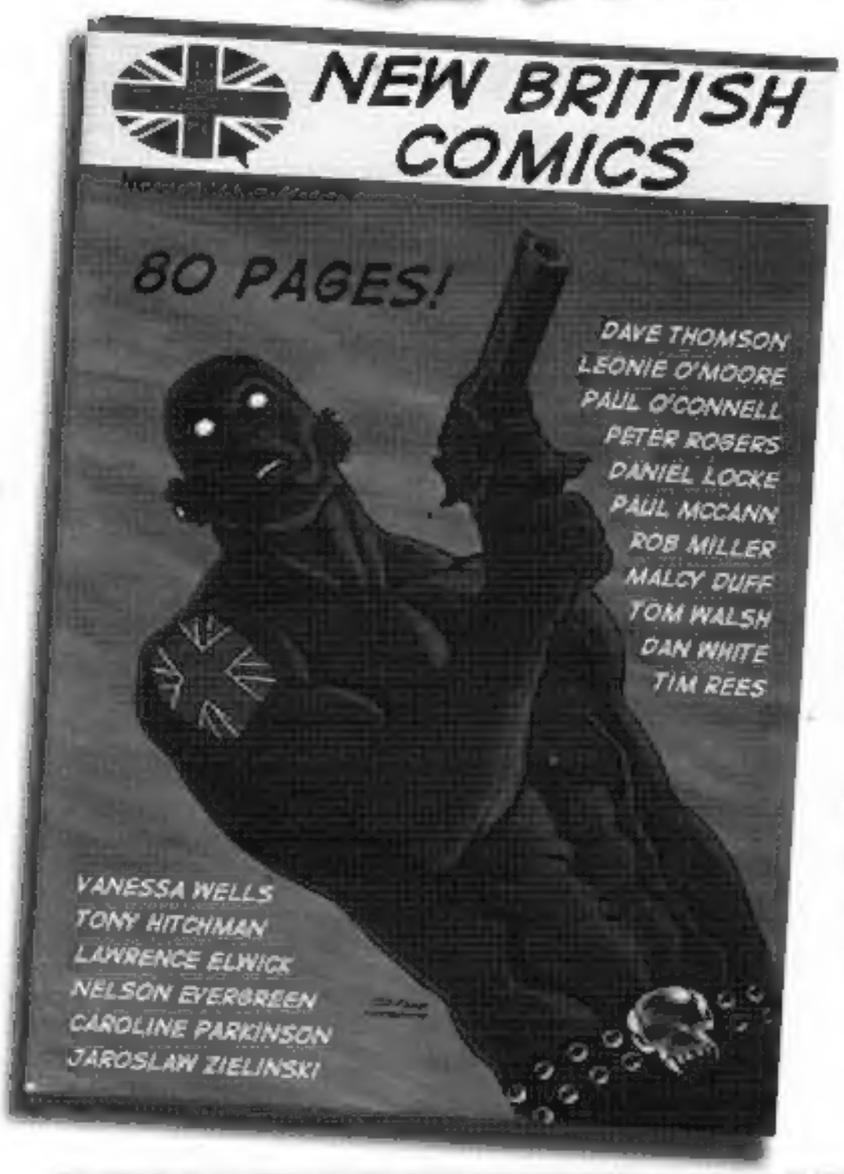
Finally, attached is a photo of me holding the latest issue in front of Union Station and the CN Tower in downtown Toronto. Thanks again!

Cheers!

Paul Hayward
(former Warlord agent, circa 1977 to 1980)
Newmarket, Ontario
Canada

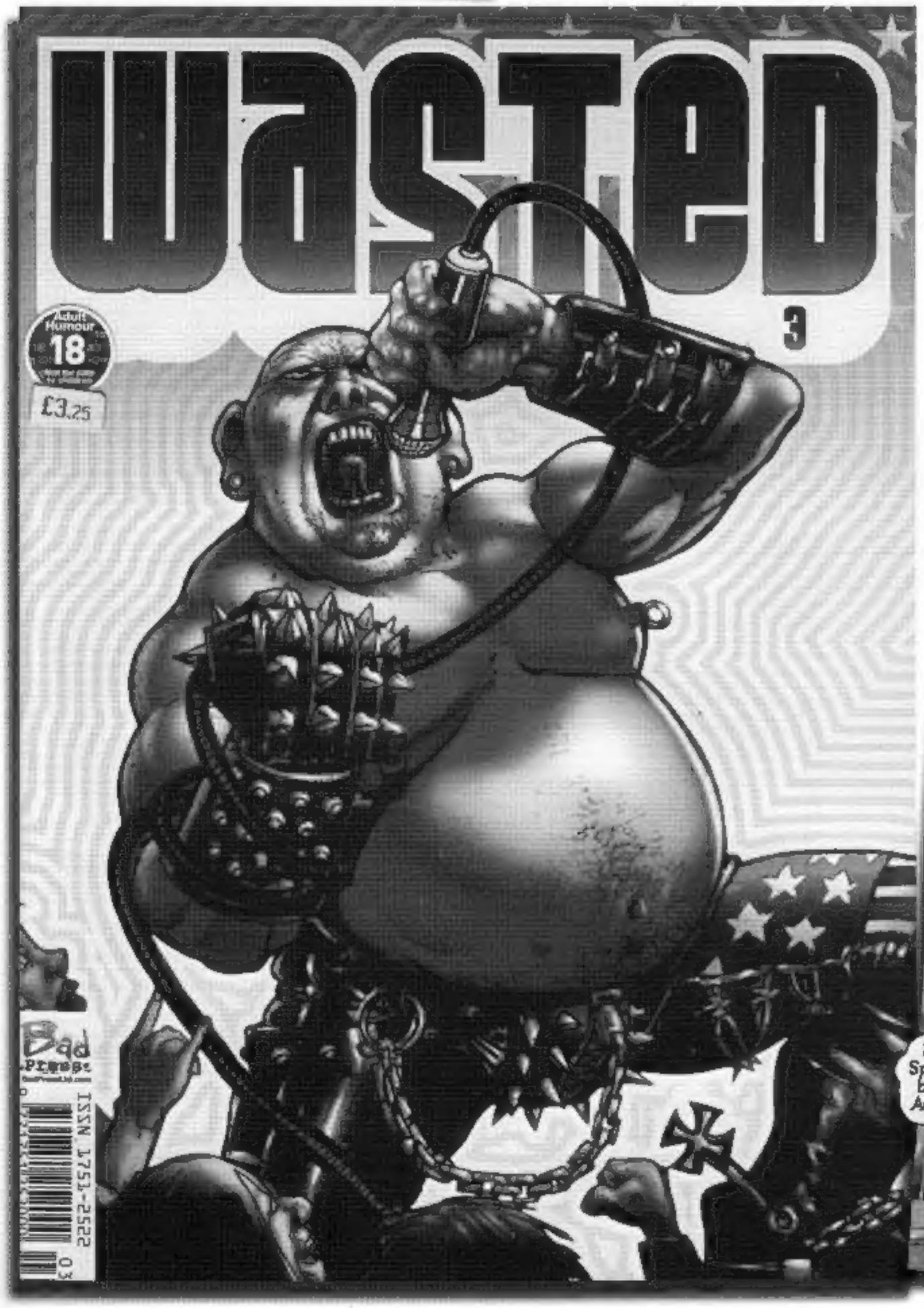
Crikey! contributor Alex Wiggan nearer home...

THE Crikey! REVIEW

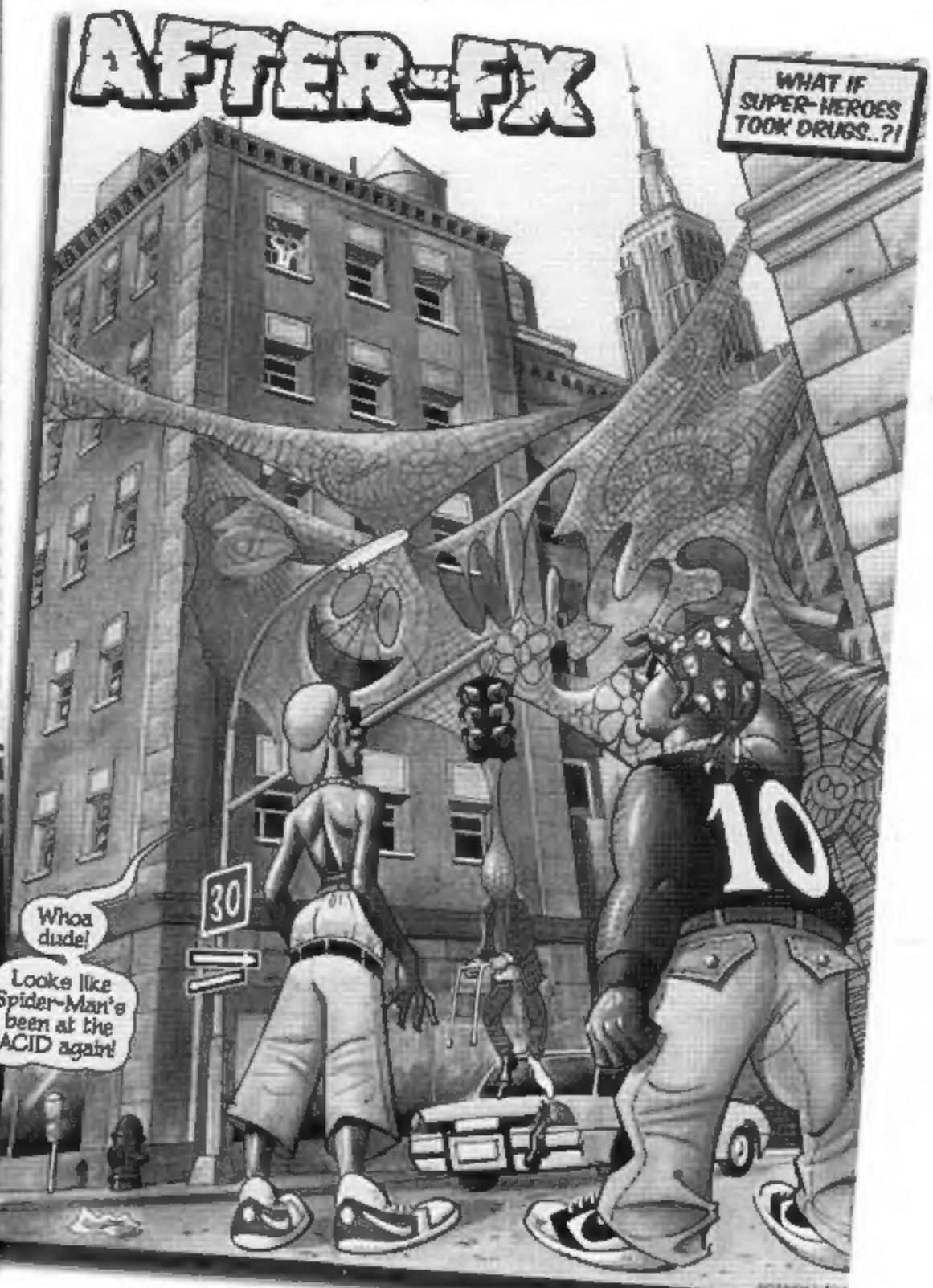


Published in both English and Polish, Karol Wisniewski's and Rob Miller's 'New British Comics' comprises vignettes of all that is good from the 'underground' comics scene. These A5, 84 page, black and white anthologies boast 13 and 14 stories respectively, bringing new art, artists and writers and some really neat stuff for you peer at. This is very definitely a project worth supporting!

For further information you can contact Karol and Rob on: karolwisnia@gmail.com and noahgendah@googlemail.com



*A beautifully produced magazine, **Wasted** comes to you via **Bad Press Ltd**. And bad it is and certainly not for the prudish or squeamish! A4, 68 black and white pages, at only £3.75 is very good value for money. Features 2000AD stalwarts Alan Grant and John Wagner at their outrageous best and some great art. Don't miss it!*



HATCH

BY GLENN B FLEMING

TO BE CONTINUED...

ATTENTION! HERE'S WHAT'S COMING FROM UGLY DUCKLING PRESS IN 2010!

THE CLOAK © 2010 MIKE HIGGS

THE COMPLETE CLOAK COLLECTION IN GLORIOUS BLACK & WHITE WILL SOON CREEP UP BEHIND YOU!

MIKE MORLEY'S PICTORIAL GUIDE TO BRITISH 1950'S SCI-FI & HORROR COMIC BOOKS WILL BE OUT SOON IN FULL COLOUR!

OH. YES... AND THIS MAGAZINE IS SET TO SELF-DESTRUCT AS SOON AS YOU'VE READ THIS AD! HAVE A NICE DAY!

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